

*Dressed with Dignity: Two Comments on Dress in the History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt**

Mat IMMERZEEL

INTRODUCTION

On the Sunday before Lent in A.M. 794 (or A.D. 1078), the quiet life of the priest monk George from Deir Abu Maqar (Monastery of St Macarius in the Wadi al-Natrun) was turned upside down: he was elected the next patriarch of the Coptic Church. To quote the account of his bibliographer Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mufarrij in the *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church* (henceforth *HPEC*): “All of them arose, [and went] to him, and they took him by force, and they clothed him with the robe, and they named him Cyril”¹. In the ensuing weeks, matters moved quickly. On 18 March the newly elected Patriarch Cyril II was officially consecrated in the Church of St Mark in Alexandria. Soon thereafter he set off to Misr (Old Cairo). On Cyril’s arrival in the Church of the Archangel Michael the Elect on Rhoda Island, Bishop Jacob of Misr contacted Sheikh Abu al-Fadl Yahya ibn Ibrahim, to urge him to officially welcome the patriarch with all honours. Abu al-Fadl duly arranged a royal processional barge to transport the esteemed guest to the East bank of the Nile. Acclaimed by a large crowd, Cyril proceeded to the official audience chamber, where he was received first by Caliph al-Mustansir and his relatives and next by Egypt’s most powerful figure at the time, Vizier Badr al-Jamali. After the mutual exchange of courtesies and homages, the patriarch left for the Church of al-Mu‘allaqa (the ‘Hanging Church’), where he was consecrated again. His tour ended a few days later with yet another consecration ceremony in the Church of the Virgin, in the Haret al-Rum quarter situated within the walls of the capital al-Qahira (Fig. 1)².

On close inspection, there is more in Mawhub’s report than the proper arrival of the 67th patriarch of the Coptic Church in Misr. He strikingly sketches how the former monk George, in his new identity as the spiritual leader of the Coptic com-

munity, was literally and figuratively inducted into the political arena of Egypt of that time, when the Fatimid Caliphate was governed by viziers of Armenian descent. The immediate cause of the rise of Armenian power had been the great unrest caused by widespread rebellion and plundering of foreign mercenaries in the Fatimid service over the preceding years. In an ultimate effort to stabilize the situation, Caliph al-Mustansir (1036-1094) sought the intervention of the Muslim Armenian chieftain Badr al-Jamali³. The firm action of Badr and his troops proved extremely successful. Appointed vizier in 1074, he founded a highly efficient dictatorship.

Naturally, the sumptuous reception of the patriarch by the state officials was arranged at the highest level. The event was carefully directed by Sheikh Abu al-Fadl, who, as the *mutawali* (supervisor) of the *Diwan* (office) of the Gates in Misr and the *Diwan* of Industry, must have been a confidant of the omnipotent vizier. Despite the uncertainties about his name, one might consider to identify him as Sheikh Abu al-Fadl ibn Usquf, the son of Bishop (*usquf*) John of Atrib, who in a later stage acted as the supervisor of all state offices and personal secretary of Badr’s son and successor, al-Afdal (r. 1094-1121). One should note that the involvement of a Christian in affairs of state was in

* This research was funded by the Netherlands Organization for Scientific Research (NWO), Leiden University, and VU University Amsterdam. I would like to thank Clara ten Hacken for her great help with the translation of the Arabic texts, Karel Innemée and Tineke Rooijakkers for their valuable recommendations, and Maria Sherwood-Smith for correcting the English in the article.

¹ *HPEC* 2.3, 325.

² *HPEC* 2.3, 325-326; den Heijer 2002, 87; *idem* 2009, 32-34.

³ For Badr al-Jamali, see Brett 2005; Dadoyan 1997, 107-127; den Heijer 1999; Lev 1991, 43-54.

no way unusual. From the early days of Fatimid hegemony, the rulers largely relied on the experience of non-Muslim (*dhimmi*) officers, who served as scribes and occasionally achieved key positions with direct access to the court. In this light, the concern of Abu al-Fadl ibn Ibrahim with the entry of Cyril in Misr embodied the long arm of the elite of Christian notables (*archons* or *sheikhs*) under the two successive Armenian viziers.

As the most appealing Coptic protagonists in the early days of Armenian hegemony, Patriarch Cyril II (1078-1092) and Sheikh Abu al-Fadl ibn Usquf merit our full attention. The reasons for our interest are two highly fascinating comments on each of these figures in the *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt* (henceforth *HCME*), a multi-layered Copto-Arabic encyclopaedic treatise from the fourteenth century, based mainly on a twelfth-century text attributed to Abu al-Makarim⁴. The *HCME* not only digresses on the decree of Cyril to manufacture the papal consecration apparel for Deir Abu Maqar; it also gives a detailed description of the garments in which Abu al-Fadl was portrayed in his funerary church in Deir al-Khandaq. With a view to the potential value of these references to the research on medieval Coptic clerical wear, we seek to determine the nature of the clothes described and establish their functional application. Moreover, we will address their significance within the context of Fatimid politics and its impact on the Coptic community. Additional attention will be paid to the complexity of the *HCME* and the implications this entails for its use as a source on the material culture of medieval Christian Egypt.

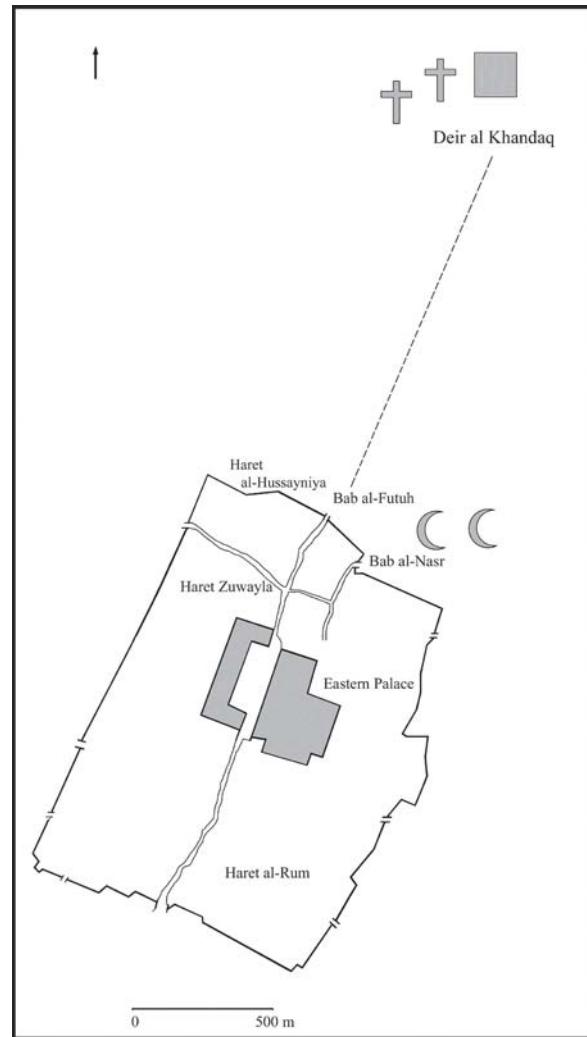


Fig. 1. Map of al-Qahira (drawing: Mat Immerzeel)

CLOTHED WITH PAPAL DIGNITY

In the lengthy digression on Deir Abu Maqar, the *HCME* touches in passing on the manufacturing of a set of papal consecration garments by order of Cyril II:

He was the one who took care of making the costume for the consecration of the patriarchs. And it was a garment of blue silk brocade and a white monk's hood and balāriya with golden ecclesiastical pictures; and it was present in the monastery⁵.

The explicit statement on the purpose for which this apparel was made firmly connects it to a crucial moment in the official installation of the keeper of

⁴ The manuscript survives in two parts, the first of which is in Paris (BnF arabe 307: Evetts/Butler 1895, henceforth *CME*), and the second in Munich (Bayerische Staatsbibliothek, Cod. Arab. 2570: Samu'il al-Suriani 1984; *idem* 1992, henceforth *CMS*). For the history and composition of the text, see den Heijer 1993; *idem* 1994; *idem* 1996, 77-81; Immerzeel 2012-2013, 27-29; Zanetti 1995.

⁵ *CMS*, 171, fols 68b-69a. The text has been revised by Clara ten Hacken.

the See of St Mark: his vesting as befitted his dignity. How the ceremony was performed is described in the chapter on Alexandria:

All the patriarchs are consecrated in the Church of St Mark known as al-Qamga. The patriarch comes to it accompanied by the bishops, the priests, the notables, and the people. Then they go around with the patriarch in the church, and the bonds of his legs are untied. Then he enters the sanctuary to the synthronon, where he stands opposite the stairs and faces the East, while all bishops stand on the lowest step and face the West. And the ritual readings are read, and every one of them lays his hand upon his head, and it is said 'Axion', that is to say: 'Worthy', thrice, and all who are present shout like that. Then it is ascended to the step and he does not cease like this until the steps are completed and he ends at the seventh according to the tradition of the church. Then he is above the upper step, and the bishops go down the stairs and stand before him. Then he is dressed with the patriarchal garments. And the greatest of the bishops takes the Bible and opens it and holds it upon his head thrice and says every time 'Agios', and he reads the chapter of it that comprises 'I am the Good Shepherd', and he says the Holy Mass and completes that, and he receives the Holy Communion and administers the Holy Communion to the people according to their tradition⁶.

Leaving aside the clever use of the *synthronon* and the identification of "the Church of St Mark known as al-Qamga", to which we will return later, the ceremonial use of the consecration garments raises no pressing questions for now⁷. In contrast, the above clause about the place where they were kept does: why were they to be stored in the remote Monastery of St Macarius, about 110 km to the south of Alexandria (Fig. 2), and nearly the same distance from Misr where Cyril was consecrated again? The analysis of the communication on this issue clearly requires an approach that goes beyond its proper content. But before we delve deeper into the background of the patriarch's assignment, let us turn to the nature of the vestments alluded to in the account.

The papal consecration garments in Deir Abu Maqar

Despite the complexity and deficiencies of the terminology employed in textual sources describing the ritual wear of the clergy and prelates, as discussed by

Karel Innemée in his dissertation published in 1992, the nature of the garments mentioned here does not pose serious problems. Taking as our point of departure the ordination rite as described in *The Lamp of Darkness and Elucidation of Service* written by Abu al-Barakat (d. 1325), we can surmise that the patriarch was clothed first with the *istihārah*, next with the *balāriyah* round his neck, and finally with the *ghaffārah*. The first garment of the three can be identified as the *sticharion*, a long-sleeved clerical tunic, and the term *ghaffārah* applies to the *phelonion* (also called *burnus* in Arabic), the cloak worn by priests⁸. In contrast, the interpretation of the word *balāriyah* is more ambiguous. The context suggests that it is an Arabic term for the *epitrachelion*, a stole worn draped around the neck, with the two ends hanging down over the chest. Accordingly, the set in the monastery would have formed the basic consecration outfit of the patriarch: an *epitrachelion*/*balāriyah* and a *phelonion*, to which a white monk's hood was added as a token of the patriarch's monastic identity.

In the Coptic imagery of sainthood, this well-defined apparel allows us to clearly distinguish former patriarchs from martyr and monastic saints⁹. Only one representation of a patriarch has come down to us that was made during his lifetime. The first page of a Gospel book written and illustrated by order of Bishop Michael of Damietta, and completed in 1179/80, shows Mark III (1166-1189; Pl. 1)¹⁰. Attended by a dark-skinned priest in pink garments, presumably of Ethiopian or Nubian origin, the patriarch seems to be portrayed in everyday dress, rather than being arrayed with ceremonial dignity. Mark is seated on a bench and wears a blue poncho-like cloak adorned with embroidered scroll patterns, with an attached hood covering his head, over a purple *sticharion*. Given his informal dress, it seems unlikely that this cape is the ceremonial cloak mentioned in the *HCME*, but the corresponding blue colour does suggest some affiliation.

⁶ CMS, 246-247, fols 102a-b (revised). For other sources, see Innemée 1992, 17-59. See also Butler 1885, 143-148; CE 6, 1909b-1911a.

⁷ For the *synthronon*, see CE 1, 221-222; Grossmann 2001, 189-191.

⁸ Innemée 1992, 36-37.

⁹ Immerzeel 2012-2013, 37-39; *idem* 2017, 85, 127-128.

¹⁰ Paris, BnF Ms Copte 13, fol. 1; Leroy 1974, 113-114, 146, 221, 223, Pl. 41; Catalogue New York 1997, no. 251, 368, 381-382, Pl. on 370.

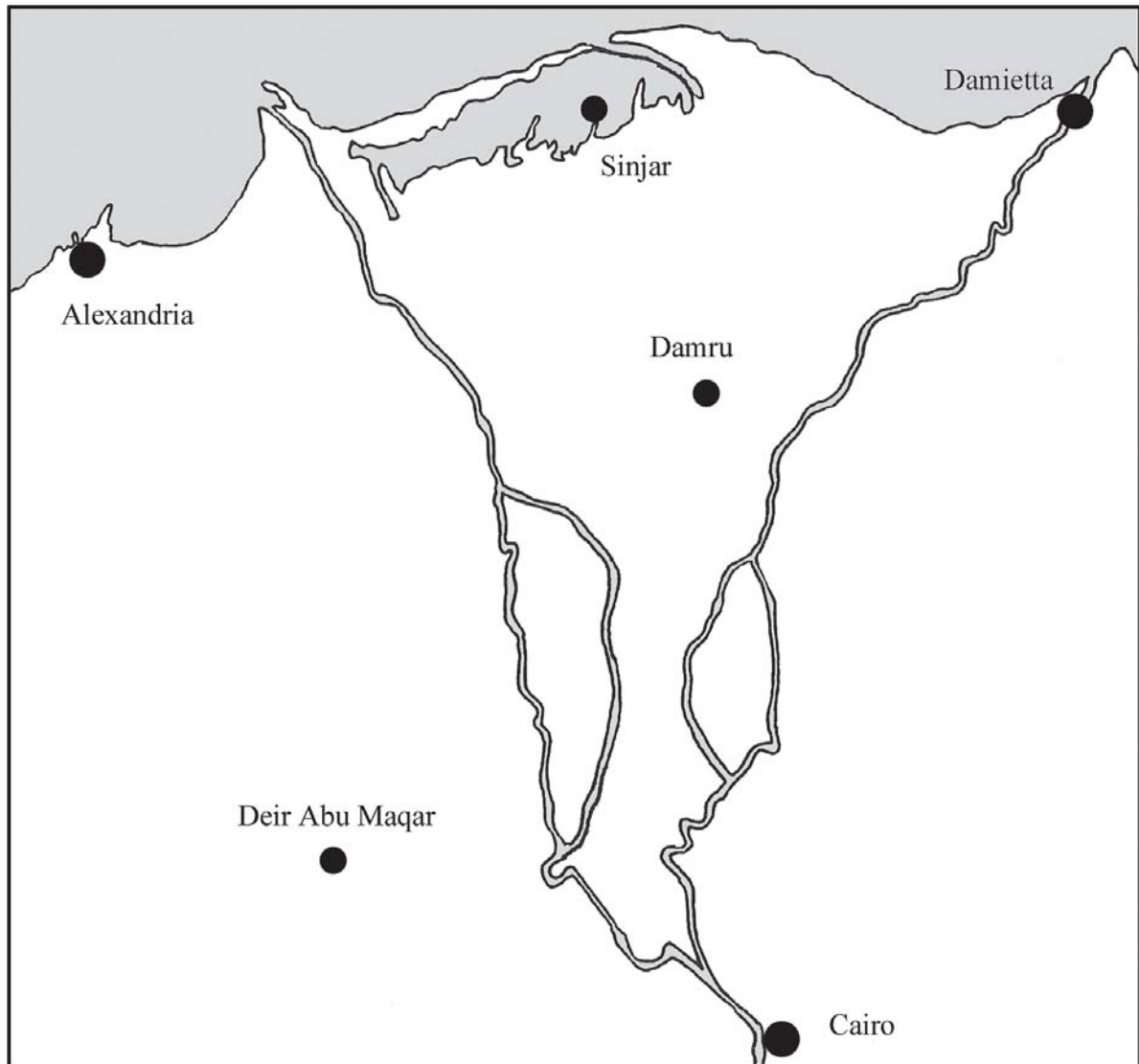


Fig. 2. Lower Egypt (drawing: Mat Immerzeel)

One element not attested in other medieval sources is the embellishment of the *balāriya* with saintly images. A nineteenth-century *epitrachelion* with the effigies of the twelve apostles, kept in the Coptic Museum, suggests that such images were indeed customary at some point in history¹¹. In the Byzantine tradition, *epitrachelia* of this kind are

first encountered around the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries¹². Assuming that the author of the *HCME* was not making up a story, we can take his testimony as unique evidence of the antiquity of the Coptic custom of embellishing clerical garments with such imagery. A further indication can be found in the images of Patriarch Dioscorus, and (probably) his Syrian counterpart Severus, depicted on the easternmost columns in the nave of the Church of al-ʿAdra in Deir al-Surian. What distinguishes them is the ornamentation on their *phelonía*. The pattern consists of scrolls connecting the busts of Christ, two angels, the Virgin, an unidentified saint, and the four evangelists in medallions¹³.

¹¹ CE 5, 1476.

¹² Woodfin 2012, 40-45.

¹³ Immerzeel 2017, 108, Pl. 50; Innemée 1998a, 149, Fig. 6; Innemée/Van Rompay 2000, 263, Fig. 9; Snelders 2010, 145-146, Pl. 19.

To return to the remark on the blue colour of the *phelonion* ordered by Cyril, we should perhaps consider it in conjunction with a somewhat puzzling phrase from the *History of the Copts* of the historian Maqrizi (1364-1442). He refers to the establishment of decrees concerning the colour of the papal garments, and again it was Cyril who issued the order. Ferdinand Wüstenfeld translated the passage in question as follows:

*Er bestimmte, dass die gewöhnliche Kleidung der Patriarchen aus blauer Seide und das Stadtkleid aus roter Seide mit goldener Stickerei bestehen solle*¹⁴.

Evidently Maqrizi was alluding to the upper garment, which was the most visible part of the patriarch's costume. In light of the perspicuous assertion in the *HCME*, it would not be too difficult to interpret the blue cape as the liturgical *phelonion* mentioned in the *HCME*, but the suggested urban use of the luxuriously adorned red garment is puzzling. Was Maqrizi alluding to a significant distinction between the patriarch's ceremonial performances in the desert and the town, or was he differentiating between the blue cloak worn at official occasions and the red cape-like cloth of the more casual everyday dress worn in the public sphere of the city? Either way, the two statements lead us to highlight the acts and whereabouts of the person who issued directives concerning his appearance and that of his successors: Patriarch Cyril II. As we will see, he stood at the centre of the historical events that fundamentally changed the papal office in the course of the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

From the desert to the city

Although the written sources are not very generous on the point of the location of the papal See, it is thought to have continued to be officially established in Alexandria (see below)¹⁵. Nonetheless, the patriarchs of the eighth to the ninth centuries resided in Deir Abu Maqar, where the papal quarters took up the upper floor of a guesthouse outside the northern gate of the fortified monastery¹⁶. This preference probably had to do with the fact that they were elected from the monastic communities in the Wadi al-Natrun, in particular Deir Abu Maqar. Conceivably, many popes used this monastic pied-à-terre as



Pl. 1. Patriarch Mark III; Paris, BnF Ms Copte 13, fol. 1 (Catalogue New York 1997, Pl. on 370)

a base from which to travel to other places whenever their presence was required there.

The Fatimid conquest in 969 ushered in a change in the relations between the rulership and the country's various religious communities, which in the longer term would also impact on the position of the spiritual church leader. Determined to

¹⁴ Wüstenfeld 1979, 67. Malan (1873, 92) translates the phrase as: "He made the patriarchal dress of blue silk, and the civic dress of red silk, with patterns in gold".

¹⁵ Den Heijer 2002, 84-87.

¹⁶ *CME*, 171-172, fol. 69a. See also Evelyn White 1932, 395-396. For the patriarchal residences, see CE 6, 1912a-1913b; den Heijer 2002, 84-87.

make the best of it, the Shiite Fatimid rulers not only involved experienced indigenous scribes – Copts, Melkites, Jews, and Muslims – in the reorganization and management of the country's administration, but also actively sought contact with the authoritative representatives of these religious groups. In line with this engagement, they increasingly inclined to consider the patriarch as a trustworthy interlocutor on behalf of the Egyptian Miaphysite Church.

That some change was in the air can be deduced from the election of Patriarch Abraham in 975, a few years after the Fatimids came to power. Unlike his predecessors, who all had a monastic background, he was a highly esteemed merchant of Syrian descent from Misr, whose candidature was fervently supported by his fellow townsmen¹⁷. The *HPEC* relates that Caliph al-Mu'izz took a great interest in Abraham; he “used to cause him to be brought to him at all times to take his opinion on what concerned him and to receive his blessing, and he asked him to live in Misr”¹⁸. Unfortunately, the patriarch died three years after his consecration, but not without leaving his mark. Abraham is accredited with the renovation of the impoverished Church of St Mercurius and that of al-Mu'allāqa in Misr, which at a later stage would alternately serve as the papal headquarters (see below).

For a variety of reasons, in particular Caliph al-Hakim's anti-Christian measures between 1004 and 1012, fertile contacts between the state and the patriarchate came to a standstill in the first decades of the eleventh century, to resurface again during the vizierate of Badr al-Jamali. Meanwhile, the Copts had achieved a major reorganization of the papal election procedure. The selection of suitable candidates and the subsequent appointment of the elect were entrusted to an election assembly recruited from the laity and priests of Alexandria and Cairo, the upper clergy, and the monks of Deir Abu Maqar, who were thus rewarded for standing

firm during the persecutions of al-Hakim¹⁹. It seems that this arrangement also encompassed a compromise according to which the different parties could put forward a candidate in turn.

It is probably in the light of this agreement that the consecration ceremony was also revised. In 1046 the council elected Patriarch Christodulus, who was a monk from Deir al-Baramus. We will return to the details of this event below, but as usual he was officially consecrated in the Church of St Mark. A new element, however, was that he was consecrated again in Deir Abu Maqar, and a third time in the Church of al-Mu'allāqa in Misr (Fig. 3)²⁰. Self-evident as the ceremony in Alexandria was, the reiteration of the procedure in the monastery and Misr would seem to have been meant to satisfy the requirements of the other factions involved. If we surmise that the supplementary consecration in Deir Abu Maqar perpetuated the monastery's long-lasting ties with papacy, and simultaneously formalized the monks' traditional say in the election procedure, the ceremony in Misr should primarily be considered in compliance with the growing influence of the Cairene notables in church affairs.

As explained above, the momentous arrival in Misr of Cyril II, who succeeded Christodulus in 1078, did not pass in silence. Leaving aside the implications of his official reception by the supreme political leaders, our interest primarily concerns his assignment to equip Deir Abu Maqar with a proper set of consecration vestments. Naturally, this initiative was closely related to the monastery's new role as a stage of the ordination ceremony, but this is not the whole story. In fact, the public inauguration of a patriarch was a logical follow-up to his election in restricted summit, which marked the beginning of his office. Cyril's patriarchate commenced not in Alexandria but in Deir Abu Maqar, with the investment with the robe (*al-thawb*) and naming, or, as his biographer Mahwub puts it in his communication on the pope's departure: the “laying-on of hands upon him”²¹. By way of comparison, the election of Christodulus was also formalized by vesting him with the papal robe²². A complication was, however, that at the time he was sojourning in a retreat by Nastrawa the east of Alexandria, near the Mediterranean coast. If we exclude the possibility that this hermitage was equipped with a patriarchal wardrobe, we can assume that the visiting representatives of the election council may have taken the required apparel from among the vestments kept in St Mark's.

¹⁷ For Abraham, see den Heijer 2004, 49-57; Swanson 2010, 48-52.

¹⁸ *HPEC* 2.2, 135-136.

¹⁹ Den Heijer 2009, 28-29; Meinardus 1989, 81.

²⁰ *HPEC* 2.3, 248, 255-256; den Heijer 2002, 88-90; *idem* 2009, 28-29.

²¹ *HPEC* 2.3, 369; den Heijer 2009, 33. For the term *thawb*, see Dozy 1845, 105-107.

²² *HPEC* 2.3, 248.

In Cyril's case, the election robe, whatever it may have been, must have come from a similar wardrobe in Deir Abu Maqar, which had housed the popes for centuries and must have been suitably equipped.

Considering the innovative second consecration of Christodulus in Deir Abu Maqar, Mahwub's silence on this ceremony in the early days of Cyril's office is all the more conspicuous (Fig. 3). The author's conscious report on the supplementary celebrations in Misr and Haret al-Rum makes it unlikely that he simply omitted the monastic part of the consecration procedure, so there must have been a reason for this silence. Leaving aside the, indeed hardly demonstrable, option that the common liturgical wear kept in Deir Abu Maqar was considered inappropriate for use in the consecration rite, one inclines to believe that Cyril's order to manufacture a *phelonion* and a *balāriya* for the monastery served a specific purpose. Was his intention perhaps to symbolically anchor the monastery's position as a stage of inauguration for the future? If so, this plan was of limited success and did not bear fruit for a long time; only a few patriarchs seem to have been consecrated wearing this set.

Against all odds, Cyril's successor Michael IV (Deir Abu Maqar; 1092-1102) was elected and, strikingly, immediately consecrated in the monastery of Sinjar, some 100 km to the east of Alexandria (Fig. 2), where he was on a retreat. Moreover, between the repetition of the ceremony in St Mark's and Misr, respectively, he made a stopover in Deir Abu Maqar – and like Cyril he was not consecrated here²³. Yet in this case, the reason for the omission is obvious: the monastic component of Michael's tripartite consecration was no longer required, as this rite had already been accomplished in Sinjar. In the end, Macarius II (1102-1128) must have been the first pope to be vested with Cyril's consecration suit. He lived as a monk in Deir Abu Maqar and was consecutively elected and consecrated here before he travelled to Alexandria and Misr for the next stages of his consecration (Fig. 3)²⁴.

What is so striking in the inauguration of Michael and Macarius is the speed with which they were consecrated on monastic soil, even before they could leave for Alexandria. If this impertinent break with the rules overtly displayed the eagerness of the monastic community to enforce their traditional claim on the papacy, it simultaneously laid bare the cracks in the hard-won consensus model of papal election and representativeness that bound the

monastic and urban factions. One underlying source of frustration was perhaps the frequent, in fact virtually permanent, absence of the patriarch from the residence in Deir Abu Maqar. This neglect had already commenced with the election of Abraham, who seems to have preferred living in his hometown Misr, and was institutionalized with the establishment of a new residence in Damru, in the Nile Delta, by Philotheus (979-1003)²⁵.

Christodulus still resided in Damru, but the patriarchate was definitively transferred to Misr during the Cyril's primacy. The main reason for this more or less involuntary move was the insistence of Badr al-Jamali, who in his zealous effort to exercise full control, from 1084 required constant access to the Coptic spiritual leader, so that he could consult him at any time. Realizing that he was trapped by the vizier who had so kindly welcomed him on his arrival in Misr, Cyril begrudgingly took up residence in the keep of the Church of St Michael on Rhoda Island, which had served as the papal accommodation at Misr from the primacy of Shenute II (1032-1046)²⁶. We do not know to what extent Cyril benefited from the infrastructure of the Church of al-Mu'allāqa and that of St Mercurius, both of which Christodulus had granted patriarchal status. At any rate, from the installation of a papal cell in the upper floor of al-Mu'allāqa by Michael IV, both churches in turn lodged the patriarchs until the early fourteenth century²⁷. Eventually the process of urbanization of the papal office turned out to be unstoppable. And the monks of Deir Abu Maqar must have had great difficulty coping with this change, which they may have perceived as a subversion of the monastery's privileges.

Turmoil in al-Mu'allāqa

The latent frictions surfaced with full force at the inauguration of Macarius II, whose name was probably not chosen by chance. After his election and consecration in Deir Abu Maqar on 9 November 1102, he travelled to Misr where he was given a fitting welcome by the aforesaid Abu al-Fadl, the

²³ HPEC 2.3, 381-385.

²⁴ HPEC 3.1, 3-7.

²⁵ CE 3, 688b-689a.

²⁶ HPEC 2.3, 327-328, and 2.2, 232, respectively.

²⁷ Immerzeel 2012-2013, 33-40; *idem* 2017, 69, 76-79.

Patriarch	Year	Origin	1 st cons.	2 nd cons.	3 rd cons.
Christodulus	1046	D. al-Baramus	ALX	DAM	MSR
Cyril II	1078	DAM	ALX	MSR	Haret al-Rum
Michael IV	1092	DAM/Sinjar	Sinjar	ALX	MSR
Macarius II	1102	DAM	DAM	ALX	MSR
Gabriel II	1131	layman Misr	MSR	ALX	DAM
Michael V	1145	DAM	MSR	ALX	
John V	1147	D. Abu Yuhennis	MSR	ALX	
Mark III	1166	layman Misr	MSR?		
John VI	1189	layman Misr	MSR?		
ALX Church of St Mark, Alexandria			DAM Deir Abu Maqar		
MSR Church of al-Mu'allāqa, Misr					

Fig. 3. Consecration of patriarchs

secretary of Vizier al-Afdal. Through the sheikh's mediation, Macarius met with the vizier himself to arrange his journey to Alexandria. Following his consecration in the Church of St Mark on 8 December, he returned to Misr to celebrate the liturgy and to be consecrated once again in al-Mu'allāqa. Yet what was intended as a peaceful celebration was spoiled by a group of monks from Deir Abu Maqar, who loudly claimed that Macarius should first celebrate the liturgy in the monastery as his predecessors had done. Realizing the extent of his problems, the patriarch hurried to the Wadi al-Natrun to comply with their demands, returning for his final consecration in Misr by the end of January 1103²⁸.

In turn, the urban factions seized their chance on the election of Gabriel II (1131-1145). An erudite, much respected scribe and deacon in the Church of St Mercurius, Gabriel was unanimously elected by the Alexandrine and Cairene laity and subsequently consecrated in al-Mu'allāqa and in St Mark's; the monks and bishops, however, had not been consulted.

Wary of the consequences of their unilateral decision, the Cairene notables dispatched a delegation to the Wadi al-Natrun to iron out the problems. They eventually obtained the consent of a monk in Deir al-Surian named Joseph the Syrian, who apparently had enough authority to convince the monastic community of Gabriel's suitability of the office. Once this sensitive matter was settled, the patriarch belatedly travelled to Deir Abu Maqar for the required consecration in a monastic setting²⁹.

Assuming that the fluctuating sequence of the consecration locations reflected the changing pecking order within the Coptic community, the monks were clearly bound to lose out. Not only was Gabriel the first patriarch to be inaugurated first in Misr, he was also the last to undergo the parallel ceremony in Deir Abu Maqar – and apparently also the last to be consecrated in the apparel made for this purpose. The next popes, Michael V (1145-1146) and John V (1147-1166), originated from the Wadi al-Natrun, but were only consecrated in al-Mu'allāqa and St Mark's³⁰. After John's death it was the monks' turn to appoint a successor, but the Cairene notables plainly overruled them with their choice of the aforementioned Mark III (1166-1189), a functionary of Syrian origin from their own circles. The next patriarch, John VI (1189-1216), was a wealthy and generous Cairene entrepreneur whose curriculum vitae was apparently so impressive that, according to the *HPEC*, the archons did not need to travel to the Wadi al-Natrun to look for another candidate³¹.

²⁸ *HPEC* 3.1, 1-7. Evelyn White considers this incident "significant as being the first attempt on the part of the patriarch to break through the web of privilege woven by the monks of Saint Macarius" (1932, 372).

²⁹ *HPEC* 3.1, 39-43.

³⁰ *HPEC* 3.1, 59-63, and 66-69, respectively. For other sources on the consecration of these patriarchs in al-Mu'allāqa, see Coquin 1974, 70.

³¹ *HPEC* 3.2, 103 (Mark III), 166-168 (John VI).

Patriarchs did certainly continue to frequent the Wadi al-Natron, and it is conceivable that they even celebrated the liturgy in Deir Abu Maqar wearing Cyril's investment garments. But again, with the exception of Macarius II and Gabriel II, they were not consecrated in them. Cyril must have been aware of the monks' indignation that a series of factors had driven the pope away from his monastic roots – a feeling that he, as a former monk at St Macarius's, may have shared. At first sight, it seems tempting to view his assignment to extend the wardrobe in Deir Abu Maqar with a consecration set as a means to salve wounded monastic egos, and, last but not least, his own conscience. On the other hand, Maqrizi's communication on Cyril's application to introduce functional distinction between the blue and red dress of the patriarch suggests a more strategic approach. However this vaguely formulated passage is interpreted, it seems to reveal the patriarch's reflection on his precarious position between two apparently incompatible worlds, and his subsequent determination to literally show his leadership towards the monastic and urban factions. One senses the struggle, and even feels that the colour of the cloak became a directive instrument to define his plural positions, but in the absence of further information we have to stop here.

THE PORTRAIT OF SHEIKH ABU AL-FADL

Let us refresh our memory. On the entry of Patriarch Macarius II into Misr in 1102 he was welcomed by the high-ranking Coptic state servant, Sheikh Abu al-Fadl ibn Usqf. The acts and whereabouts of this fascinating intermediary between the court and the church survive in a number of comments in the *HPEC* and the *HCME*. Since he was reportedly involved in the election of the bishop of Misr as late as 1118, the duration of his career can rightly be called impressive³². The *HCME* commemorates Abu al-Fadl as a great benefactor whose generosity towards the Church extended from modest gifts to the erection and refurbishment of sanctuaries. His concern with the installation of the papal See in Misr comes to the fore particularly in the building of the Church of St George in the upper floor of the Church of St Mercurius, which actually inaugurated the arrangement of a patriarchal compound on top of this church³³. Our interest is particularly drawn by the comment on one

other achievement of Abu al-Fadl: the foundation of the Church of the Virgin in Deir al-Khandaq to the north of the Fatimid capital al-Qahira (Fig. 1). In this case, however, his benevolence was principally inspired by pure self-interest: like many other Christian notables, he needed an appropriate burial place for himself and his relatives:

The [Church of the Lady St Mary the Virgin] was on the right hand of the person entering. The Sheikh Abu al-Fadl, son of the bishop of Atrib, who was in charge of the diwan of al-Afdal in the caliphate of al-Amir and the vizierate of al-Afdal Shahansah, built it. Underneath it was the tomb of the above-mentioned sheikh and his sons, below the sanctuary. At the foot of its dome, there is his picture and the picture of his son Abu al-Surur, and their garments are white, each of them with a ballin, supplicating our Lord Jesus Christ – to whom is the glory³⁴.

The listing of Abu al-Fadl's official positions and the rulers he served allows us to retrieve the early building history of the church. Given that al-Amir was the caliph from 1101 to 1130, and al-Afdal the vizier from 1094 to 1121, it must have been built and embellished between 1101 and 1121, that is, when Abu al-Fadl held the office of secretary to the latter. But what makes this passage really interesting is the remark on the portraits of the founder and his son in the altar room (*haykal*). As no contemporary effigies of Coptic laymen have yet been found³⁵, it constitutes a crucial testimony to the existence of this category of donor effigies in Fatimid Egypt. In line with our approach to the report on the manufacturing of the papal garments by decree of Cyril II, we seek to interpret the representations described against the background of the prominent position of the Christian notables in the Fatimid era. In this matter, we are interested in the history of Deir al-Khandaq as it has come down to us in the *HCME*, and several funerary paintings that once adorned the churches and tombs in this monastery, as well as in the versatility of the Coptic

³² Immerzeel 2012-2013, 29-31; *idem* 2017, 77.

³³ Immerzeel 2012-2013, 33-34; *idem* 2017, 78.

³⁴ *CMS*, 32, fol. 16b (revised translation).

³⁵ For an earlier donor image in the Red Monastery near Sohag, see Bolman 2011.

functionaries within the state administration and their tight relations with the church.

Abu al-Makarim and Deir al-Khandaq

Deir al-Khandaq, or the Monastery of the Moat, was established in the wake of the Fatimid conquest of Egypt and the subsequent founding of al-Qahira in 969. In recompense for the loss of a monastery dedicated to St George, which had to make way for the construction of the Eastern Palace, the Coptic community received permission to establish a new monastic settlement across the moat (*khandaq*) dug to defend the city from the north. Deir al-Khandaq no longer exists, but was located near the site of the present-day Cathedral of St Mark in Abbasiya, barely two kilometres from the northern city wall (Fig. 1)³⁶.

Since the *HCME* is the most complete source on the many churches and utility buildings in Deir al-Khandaq (fols 14b-18b), it is worth delving deeper into the figure of Abu al-Makarim, the probable author of the part of the text that relates to events between about 1160 and 1187, and the personal interest he took in this settlement. The text states that Abu al-Makarim, in full Sheikh Abu al-Makarim Sa'dallah ibn Jirjis ibn Mas'ud, "the editor (*nāẓim*) of the book", lived in the courtyard of the Church of the Virgin in Haret Zuwayla, a Christian quarter in the northwest corner of al-Qahira (Fig. 1)³⁷. We will later return to this identification, but it seems that Abu al-Makarim was one of the many Copts to benefit from the monastery's presence so close to the capital. His wife Sitt al-Dar owned a garden outside the eastern

wall of the complex, and it was his task to irrigate the agricultural ground³⁸. Abu al-Makarim's frequent visits to Deir al-Khandaq to water the plants, so to speak, might explain why he was so well acquainted with its history and infrastructure. He must have seen the paintings in the Church of the Virgin with his own eyes.

The area around the monastery also served as a major burial ground for Christian citizens³⁹, which was extended through the intermediacy of Abu al-Fadl when it became congested (Fig. 1)⁴⁰. However, the rich and powerful were not interred in the cemetery, but rather in the churches or in the attached gardens within the complex, some of which they had founded themselves. This custom commenced with the building of the Church of St Mercurius by Sheikh Abu al-'Ala Fahd ibn Ibrahim around the turn of the tenth century⁴¹. Appointed supervisor of all the state offices by Caliph al-Hakim (996-1021), he was beheaded in 1003 because of his refusal to convert to Islam⁴². Abu al-'Ala and his family were interred underneath the southern *haykal* of the church he founded. Besides this church and that of the Virgin, the Church of St George⁴³ and the Churches of St Apoli⁴⁴, the Disciples, and St Philotheus (see below) are also said to have housed the tombs of prominent Christians.

The paintings in the Church of the Virgin and other churches

Let us now take a closer look at what the *HCME* has to say about the murals in the *haykal* in the Church of the Virgin. The text briefly sketches the composition of the paintings, asserting that they consisted of the image of Christ and the portraits of Abu al-Fadl and his son Abu al-Surur. One might expect Christ to have been featured in the conch, enthroned in a mandorla framed by the Four Living Creatures and flanked by two archangels. That the Cairene Copts were familiar with the longstanding iconography of Christ Enthroned as depicted in altar rooms follows from the detailed comment on one such scene in the Church of the Virgin of Haret Zuwayla, near where Abu al-Makarim lived: "In the niche of that church is an image of our Saviour Jesus Christ, to whom is the glory, on the throne, and the four Faces carrying him"⁴⁵. Not surprisingly, this description neatly connects with surviving examples in a few churches in Old Cairo. The best-preserved scene is in the southern

³⁶ CE 3, 814b-815a. Two churches in the vicinity of the cathedral are purported to be the last remnants of Deir al-Khandaq: the Church of St Michael al-Bahari, and the Church of Anba Ruways. The latter is thought to have been the Church of St George.

³⁷ *CMS*, 7, fol. 5a.

³⁸ *CMS*, 37-38, fol. 18b.

³⁹ Casanova 1901, 167.

⁴⁰ *CMS*, 35, fols 17b-18a.

⁴¹ *CMS*, 22, 33, fols 11b-12a, 17a.

⁴² Samir 1996, 181-182.

⁴³ For the burial of the Nubian King Solomon in the Church of St George in 1080, see *HPEC* 2.3, 328; *CME*, 270-271, fols 98a-b; Immerzeel 2012-2013, 41-42.

⁴⁴ *CMS*, 31-32, fol. 16a.

⁴⁵ *CMS*, 2, fol. 3a.



Pl. 2. *Christ Enthroned (repainted), Old Cairo, Church of St George, upper floor of the Church of St Mercurius* (photograph: Mat Immerzeel)

sanctuary of the Church of St Sergius (Abu Sarga); the stylistic features allow us to date this image to the final quarter of the twelfth century or the first half of the thirteenth century⁴⁶. A similar representation can be seen in the *haykal* of the Church of St George in the upper floor of the Church of St Mercurius (Pl. 2). Although St George's was founded by Abu al-Fadl, the extant paintings in this church and other chapels on the same level were applied when the complex was restored in the early days of Ayyubid rule, in all probability at the instigation of an *archon* named Abu al-Fada'il in or shortly after 1174/75⁴⁷.

The apse paintings in St George's provide a textbook example of the common double composition featuring Christ Enthroned in the half-dome, along with the Virgin Enthroned with the Child on her lap between two archangels⁴⁸. Yet if we accept that the conch painting in Abu al-Fadl's church complied with this conventional model, we should also admit the possibility that the comment that has

come down to us is incomplete. On closer consideration, the description of supplicants addressing their prayers to Christ is decidedly unusual in this context. Given the dedication of the church to the Virgin, one would expect the supplicants to be portrayed on either side of her. We must assume that this essential detail was omitted from the original account or overlooked in the composition of the fourteenth-century compilation.

That the author's fascination of the pictures of illustrious Copts buried in Deir al-Khandaq was not

⁴⁶ Bolman 2008, 176, Fig. 9.20; Sheehan 2010, 17, 106, Pls 16-17.

⁴⁷ Immerzeel 2012-2013, 33-40; *idem* 2017, 78-80; van Loon 1999, 17-30; Zibawi 2003, 167-168, Figs 218-219. For the contemporary double composition in the Church of the Virgin in the upper floor of St Mercurius's, which shows the Ascension, see Gabra/Eaton-Krauss 2006, 247, Pl. 155; van Loon 1999, Pls 33-35; Zibawi 2003, 164, 167, Fig. 220.

⁴⁸ Van Moorsel 2000.

confined to those of Abu al-Fadl and his son is apparent from the conspicuous comments on funerary portraits in some of the other churches in the monastery. He refers, for instance, to the effigy of Sheikh Mustafa al-Mulk Abu Yussef on his tomb in the porch of the Church of the Disciples⁴⁹. Incidentally, Mustafa was not just any notable: he was married to a daughter of Abu al-Fadl. In this light, it comes as no surprise that the church stood in the enclosed garden of the Church of the Virgin, which was also used for burials. It was built by this couple's son – and thus Abu al-Fadl's grandson – Sheikh Ezz al-Kufah, as a funerary monument for his father. Likewise, Bishop Zakharious ibn Arnun of Atrib in the Nile Delta (d. 1180/81) was depicted on his tomb on the right-hand side of the entrance to the Church of St Philotheus⁵⁰. Another comment, which is unfortunately too diffuse to be edited in full here, concerns the images of three deceased high functionaries in the sanctuary of the Church of the Three Youths built on top of the Church of St George. Founded by Sheikh Amin al-Mulk Abu Sa'id Mahbub during the rule of Caliph al-Zafir (1149-1154), the church was meant to commemorate his father Abu al-Makarim, called ibn Bulus, and his brothers al-Akram and Sams al-Ri'asa. They were high servants of Caliph al-Hafiz (1130-1149), who ultimately ordered them to be beheaded in December 1147 or January 1148⁵¹.

Let us examine the communications on the effigies of historical figures in Deir al-Khandaq. The *HCME* distinguishes three categories: donor portraits (Abu al-Fadl and Abu al-Surur), funerary portraits (Mustafa al-Mulk and Bishop Zakharious), and commemorative portraits (Abu al-Makarim

ibn Bulus and his sons). There can be no misunderstanding about the function of the depictions of Mustafa and Bishop Zacharious: as their tombs stood in publicly accessible areas, their images were meant to be seen by all churchgoers. In contrast, Abu al-Fadl and his son were represented in the apse of the *haykal* of their funerary church. The privilege of being buried below the altar was reserved for the happy few who could afford the luxury of a self-built church, but it did have a drawback: only clerics could access this holy ground. Taking this significant restriction into consideration, we must deduce that the public visibility of the effigies was of lesser concern than a purpose of a different order. The designers of the murals and their clients seem to have been principally concerned with the symbolical integration of the portraits into the situational context of the sanctuary.

The garments of the portrayed

As regards the occurrence of portrayals of supplicants in sanctuaries, the Byzantine pictorial tradition is unambiguous: as Doula Mouriki sees it, the prerogative of being eternalized in *proskynesis* in the main composition behind the altar was reserved for clergy and monks⁵². Assuming that things were not fundamentally different in the Coptic context, this touches on the very heart of the matter: why would Abu al-Fadl, the embodiment of secular power, be featured in the *haykal*, even if he was interred here? The clue is found in the significant note on the white garments of the depicted, "with a *ballin*". On closer inspection, this clause was meant to emphasize that they were not portrayed in their robes of public office or in everyday dress, but very properly arrayed with the dignity of active participants in the liturgy. Multiple Coptic sources attest to the centuries-old prescription of the colour white for clerical garments⁵³, and the term *ballin* derives from the Latin *pallium* (παλλιον in Greek; also named *omophorion*), a long scarf that prelates wore over the *phelonion*, the two ends hanging down from their shoulders⁵⁴. However, it is doubtful if Abu al-Fadl and Abu Surrur were ever consecrated as bishops. As stated in the *Canons of Church Law* of the Cairene notable Safi ibn al-'Assal, who completed this compilation of customs and prescriptions in 1238, laymen were excluded from episcopal office⁵⁵. More interestingly, the term is also regularly applied to designate the long stole worn

⁴⁹ *CMS*, 32-33, fol. 16b.

⁵⁰ *CMS*, 34, fol. 17b.

⁵¹ *CMS*, 28-29, fols 14b-15a. Part of the family's story is also told in the chapter about the Church of the Virgin in Haret Zuwayla (*CMS*, 4-5, fols 3b-4b). For a summarizing interpretation of these texts, see Samir 1996, 187-188.

⁵² Mouriki 1984, 182-183. For medieval representations of lay donors in the Middle East, see Immerzeel 2009, 161-166. By exception, a lay couple depicted at either side of the Virgin is found in the apse of the Church of St Kyriake, Marathos, Mesa Mani (Kalopissi-Verti 1992, 27, 101-102, B10, Figs 95-97).

⁵³ For example, the Canons of Pseudo-Athanasius prescribe that "the garments of the priests, wherein they celebrate, shall be white and washed" (Riedel/Crum 1973, 31).

⁵⁴ Innemée 1992, 50-54.

⁵⁵ Hanna 1996, 10.



Pl. 3. Icon: *The Twenty-Four Elders of the Apocalypse*, detail; Church of St Mercurius, Old Cairo
(photograph: Mat Immerzeel)

over the *sticharion* of priests and deacons, commonly known as *epitrachelion* and *orarion*, respectively, with the two ends hanging down over the chest but draped differently⁵⁶.

Starting with the garments of priests, the *Canons of Church Law* describes their prescribed outfit as follows:

*The clothes in which they celebrate the Liturgy should be white, suitable to the priests, and not coloured. [...] The dress of the priest in liturgy should be distinguished from that of the laymen. [...] These clothes should come down to the feet of the priests and there should be balālīn present on their shoulders. [...]*⁵⁷.

The context suggests that the term *ballīn*, here written in its plural form *balālīn*, should be understood as *epitrachelion*. At this point, the philological

and functional similarities with the *balāriyah* mentioned in the passage about the papal garments in Deir Abu Maqar cannot escape us⁵⁸. How the common priestly liturgical garments looked is best illustrated by a thirteenth-century icon in the Church of St Mercurius, displaying the Twenty-Four Elders, or Priests, of the Apocalypse, (Pl. 3). Each of them is clothed in a *phelonion* – of various colours, – worn over an *epitrachelion*/*ballīn* and a *sticharion*, and each is holding an incense box and swinging a censer⁵⁹.

⁵⁶ Innemée 1992, 41–42.

⁵⁷ 'Awad 1908, 123; Rooijakkers 2015, 383 (transl.); Hanna 1996, 56.

⁵⁸ Innemée 1992, 36.

⁵⁹ Immerzeel 2017, 83, Pl. 30, with further references. It should be noted that the icon is attributed to a Byzantine-trained artist working for a Coptic client.

Regarding the use of the term in connection with the liturgical vestments of deacons, we refer to the *Canons of Benjamin I*:

*Qu'un prêtre ne monte pas à l'autel sans avoir revêtu son pallium d'abord, avant d'offrir l'encens. Qu'un diacre, quelque'il soit, ne communie pas sans se revêtir de l'épomis, alors c'est un pallium*⁶⁰.

Given the risk of becoming entangled in a lengthy discussion on the terms transmitted in the literary sources, we leave aside the problematic interpretation of the term *epomis*, perhaps used as a synonym of *orarion*⁶¹. It is also possible that, depending on the message they wished to convey, contemporary authors were equally inclined to avoid the subtle use of specific, and therefore distracting terms. In this light, the notion of the *ballin* in the *HCME* can perhaps be regarded as a collective term to cover the various, but nevertheless very similar stoles worn by the clergy.

But how can the indisputable position of Abu al-Fadl as a leading state administrator and authority within the Cairene Coptic community be reconciled with clerical office? We can virtually exclude the possibility that he brazenly assumed a position he did not deserve, given that the *Canons of Church Law* categorically prohibit dressing as a priest if one does not hold priestly office⁶², and we can safely assume that this rule also extended to deacons. However, it is important to bear in mind that the modern Western concept of strict separation between religiosity and secularity by no means reflects the situation in the medieval Middle East. As Adel Sidarus explains, members of Christian, Jewish, and Muslim communities used to combine everyday duties with religious tasks⁶³. Many Coptic bigwigs volunteered as deacons or, less often, as priests, preferably in the church they

had founded or renovated from their own resources. Moreover, some notables liberally contributed to the modernization of the Church and the recording of its history, whereas others even served as popes⁶⁴. To list a few illustrative examples: Mawhub ibn Mansur ibn Mirrarrij, the initiator of the *HPEC* and bibliographer of Christodulus and Cyril II, was a prominent Alexandrine notable who simultaneously acted as a deacon in his hometown and keeper of the Copts' most precious relic: the head of St Mark⁶⁵. Before his access to the papal see as Patriarch Gabriel II in 1131, the Cairene *archon* Abu al-'Ula ibn Tarik combined his career as a lay scribe with diaconal duties in the patriarchal Church of St Mercurius in Misr⁶⁶. Sheikh Abu al-Fada'il, finally, a deacon in St Mercurius's known for his concern with the refurbishing and embellishment of the papal compound in the upper floor of this church in the 1170s (Pl. 3), earned his living as the secretary of a Kurdish emir⁶⁷.

In terms of devotion and responsibility towards the community, these busy individuals understandably preferred to serve in a minor capacity as a deacon, rather than invest in the time-consuming daily duties inherent to priesthood. One should also consider the possibility that the diaconate of notables bestowed an honorary status that allowed them to limit their input to special occasions. All in all, there is every reason to believe that Abu al-Fadl and Abu al-Surur attended the ritual performances in their family church as deacons rather than priests, probably on an *ad-hoc* basis.

One final question concerns the author's motivations for inserting the clause on the figures' white dress and *ballin*. Of course, the Coptic public were familiar with the custom of notables serving as deacons, but how would they have reacted to depictions of lay figures in this capacity in a *haykal*, as eternal concelebrants of the liturgy, so to speak? If we imagine ourselves in the position of the author, recording the history of the Church of the Virgin as a lay foundation, it seems likely that he worried that his readers might misunderstand the wording of his actual observations as an endorsement of an ostensible infringement of sanctity. In anticipation of their irritation, he cleverly found a way out of this predicament by inserting the comment on the figures' wear as a self-explanatory justification of the fact that they were fully entitled to be depicted behind the altar.

⁶⁰ Coquin 1975, 154-157; Innemée 1992, 39.

⁶¹ Innemée 1992, 48, 55; Rooijakkers 2015, 378-382.

⁶² 'Awad 1908, 374; Hanna 1996, 175.

⁶³ Sidarus 2002, 155.

⁶⁴ Immerzeel 2017, 60-63.

⁶⁵ Den Heijer 1996, 69-73; Swanson 2010, 61-66.

⁶⁶ *HPEC* 3.1, 39-41; Swanson 2010, 67-68. The *Order of Priesthood* prescribes that laymen had no access to the See unless they also held clerical office (Assfalg 1955, 98, fol. 142r).

⁶⁷ Immerzeel 2017, 78-79.

Although the analysis of the communications discussed here demonstrates the phenomenal historical value of the *HCME*, it should be borne in mind that the text only survives in a fourteenth-century, multi-layered compilation that is yet to be critically edited and translated in full. Scholars who consult the treatise as a historical source should always be aware of the possible shortcomings of their interpretations. Proper use of the text calls for an interdisciplinary approach.

To reduce the risk of wrong interpretations of the passages quoted in the present study, we have received the greatly appreciated assistance of Clara ten Hacken, whose experience with the *HCME* is undisputed⁶⁸. Her revisions of the English translations from the original Arabic text constitute a considerable improvement compared to those in Bishop Samu'il al-Suriany's edition of the chapters dealing with the northern Cairo area and Lower Egypt⁶⁹. To contextualize our analysis of the recorded manufacturing of the papal consecration garments and the interpretation of the chapter on Deir al-Khandaq and its monuments, we devote some consideration to the complexity of authorship and contents. Given the prominent position of Alexandria as the official location of the papal See, we will also briefly comment on the composition of the chapter about the city, and the salient information it furnishes about the Church of St Mark.

Our preference for referring to the text in this study as the *HCME* is primarily meant to overcome the legitimate question of authorship. What is certain is that the customary attribution of the text to Abu al-Makarim, who lived in the second half of the twelfth century, should not be taken too literally. To illustrate this point, we refer to Johannes den Heijer, who, in his preliminary analysis of the compilation, distinguishes four main layers in the composition of the text. The first layer, which seems to form the main body of the text and covers the period between about 1160 and 1187, was followed by an intermediate layer added around 1190, and was extended once again between about 1200 and 1220. Finally, the account acquired its present shape in the second quarter of the fourteenth century⁷⁰. Our principal argument for connecting Abu al-Makarim with the first layer derives from the statements in the text, anyway undated, that he

lived in Haret Zuwayla and frequently visited Deir al-Khandaq to take care of his wife's garden outside the monastery. Given that the detailed description of the monastery displays the author's great familiarity and affinity with its history until the first years of Ayyubid rule, it is tempting to identify him as Abu al-Makarim.

Though this personalization of authorship may be appealing, den Heijer aptly notes that the passages on the private life of Abu al-Makarim address him with his honorific titles in the third person, first as the editor (*nāẓim*) of the book in the chapter about Haret Zuwayla, and next as its compiler (*muṣannif*) in the digression on Deir al-Khandaq⁷¹. If the diverging formulation of these phrases already calls into question the extent of Abu al-Makarim's individual input, a further comment on the consecration of the Church of St Apoli in the monastery "in the presence of the writer (*kātib*) of these [letters?]" on 1 Misra, A.M. 907, that is, 7 July 1191, increases the confusion⁷². In den Heijer's view, it is impossible to tell whether the person who attended the ceremony in St Apoli's was the author or the compiler of the earlier layer or the intermediary layer, let alone if any of these figures can be identified as Abu al-Makarim⁷³. In this light, the possibility of shared authorship should be considered seriously. One imagines that the documenting of the Coptic patrimony in the second half of the twelfth century was entrusted to a team that included, or was supervised by Abu al-Makarim, and continued by the next generations of encyclopaedists.

One more consideration relates to the evident reliance of the subsequent contributors on earlier texts, which in itself is not unusual in historiography⁷⁴. The transmission of information is revealed particularly in the quotations on the colour(s) of the patriarchal cloak from the chapter devoted to Deir Abu Maqar in the *HCME* and Maqrizi's *History of the Copts*. On balance, in their final shape these comments are devoid of any wider historical context. All one can say is that the authors must

⁶⁸ See ten Hacken 2006, for example.

⁶⁹ Samu'il al-Suriany 1992 (*CME*).

⁷⁰ Den Heijer 1993, 218-219.

⁷¹ Den Heijer 1993, 214-215.

⁷² *CMS*, 31-32, fol. 16a.

⁷³ Den Heijer 1993, 217.

⁷⁴ Den Heijer 1994.

have drawn the details from accounts that as yet remain unidentified, perhaps without full understanding of the role of the decrees in their time. Since the consecration ceremony in Deir Abu Maqar had already been consigned to the past after the accession of Gabriel II in 1131, the issue of the vestments made for this purpose some four decades earlier had already ceased to be relevant by the time the first layer was composed. In the absence of other textual sources dealing with this issue, it is impossible to answer the question whether the distinction in colours of the papal garments reported by Maqrizi was still in force in his days, that is, the latter part of the fourteenth century and the first half of the fifteenth century. Today the patriarch wears a red cloak on official occasions (Pl. 5), but all we have to retrace the origin of this custom is Maqrizi's remark.

Compared to the comments on Deir al-Khandaq and other churches and monasteries in the Greater Cairo area⁷⁵, the lengthy discourse on the history and churches of Alexandria (fols 77b-102b) seems to exude a different atmosphere. Apart from the regular accreditation of earlier sources, some of which are named or identifiable⁷⁶, for the multiple details given, the account by and large covers situations and events up to the rule of Caliph al-Amir and Vizier al-Afdal and the primacy of Macarius II (d. 1128)⁷⁷. On the other hand, it also includes some demonstrably later additions, such as an allusion to the demolition of the church dedicated to St Mark, known as al-Qamga, in 1219: "The Muslims tore down the church's roof during the invasion of the Franks who arrived from Sicily, but it was rebuilt afterwards"⁷⁸. The main source on this incident, a dramatic loss in Coptic eyes, is the *HPEC*. Realising the strategically vulnerable position of the building, the Ayyubid supreme command ordered



Pl. 4. Patriarch Shenouda II (1971-2012; Internet)

"the Church of Saint Mark which was on the outskirts of Alexandria, known as al-Kamha", to be broken down to the ground to prevent it from falling into the hands of the Frankish troops during the Fifth Crusade⁷⁹.

What concerns us here is not so much the actual content of the communication on the destruction of St Mark's; rather it is the aside on its location outside the city that is conspicuous, all the more so because the *HCME* displays more transparency in this matter. The various textual references to the Church of St Mark continue to generate a lot of confusion to the present day. It is known that Cyril I (412-444) founded a church dedicated to the saint near the seashore. Soon after the destruction of this building in 644, Patriarch Benjamin (623-662) developed plans to reconstruct it as a shrine for the relic of the saint's head; but in the end this project was accomplished decades later by John III (680-689)⁸⁰. The *HPEC* reports that it took him three years to restore "the church of the glorious martyr and evangelist Saint Mark". On his death, John was interred in the tomb that he had arranged for himself in the building⁸¹. The fact that the new church was actually erected outside the city only becomes clear in the *HCME*'s detailed chapter on al-Qamga⁸². The text not only recounts the

⁷⁵ For Alexandria in the *HPEC*, see Martin 1998.

⁷⁶ Den Heijer 1994, 420-422.

⁷⁷ *CMS*, 199, fols 81a-b.

⁷⁸ *CMS*, 227, fol. 94b.

⁷⁹ *HPEC* 4.1, 62; Werthmüller 2010, 65.

⁸⁰ Chaîne 1924; McKenzie 2007, *passim*.

⁸¹ *PO* 5.1, 18, 21.

⁸² *CMS*, 224, fol. 92b. The patriarchs said to be interred in al-Qamga are Isaac (690-692), Simon I (692-700), John IV (777-799), Mark II (799-819), and Joseph (831-849). In addition, the thirteenth-century historian Girgis al-Makin ibn Amid identifies the Church of St Mark as "al-Kamsija" (Chaîne 1924, 384-385).

story of John's building project and burial place, it also gives a detailed account of the presence here of the tombs of several of his successors⁸³, and renovations carried out by Christodulus and Cyril II⁸⁴.

In passing, the *HCME* also expresses a dissident, if not to say explosive, view on how the Coptic community came into the possession of the head of St Mark: not by a miracle, as reported in the *HPEC*, but thanks to a down-to-earth agreement with the Melkites⁸⁵. On the division of Alexandrine properties between the two communities – when this occurred remains unmentioned –, the Copts obtained the saint's skull and the al-Qamga church, whereas the Melkites took possession of the saint's body and the monastery dedicated to St Mark to the east of Alexandria⁸⁶. It was from here that Venetian merchants took the relics to their home town in 828⁸⁷. The head, which was safely in al-Qamga at that time, remains in Coptic hands until the present day.

Reading between the lines, we can see that the *HCME* reveals a crucial aspect that has tended to be overlooked: probably due to circumstances – that is, the fierce struggle for hegemony between the Melkites and the Miaphysites – the Coptic patriarchate seems to have been moved to a safe haven beyond the walls of the city. At least this clarifies why the above passage on the papal consecration ritual claims the extramural al-Qamga church as the usual stage of events. Since we know that the church was demolished in 1219, the account evidently applies to the situation as it was before, but what happened next? For a variety of reasons, the Coptic Church remained without official leadership from the death of John VI in 1216 to the accession to the See of the controversial Cyril III ibn Laqlaq in 1235⁸⁸. He was consecrated in the Church of the Saviour in Alexandria⁸⁹. To judge from the description of this alternative location in the *HCME* as “a spacious and well constructed church” outside the city walls, it was particularly suitable to receive the large crowds expected to attend⁹⁰. If the biographies of Cyril's successors had been as conscientiously written as the account on the dwellings and whereabouts of this patriarch, we would probably also have been better informed about the churches in which they were consecrated. Unfortunately, later biographers were no longer interested in this matter; all we know is that Matthew I (1378-1408) was the last patriarch inaugurated in Alexandria⁹¹.

CONCLUSIONS

The present analysis of the communications on the papal consecration garments ordered by Patriarch Cyril II and kept in Deir Abu Maqar, and the appearance of Sheikh Abu al-Fadl and his son in the Church of the Virgin in Deir al-Khandaq, has been much facilitated by the several references in the *HCME* and *HPEC* to the whereabouts and dwellings of these important Coptic public figures. It is possible not only to identify the garments, but also to reconstruct the context in which they functioned.

The set of consecration garments consisted of a lavishly embroidered blue *phelonion*, an *epitrachelion*, here named *balāriya*, and a white monk's hood. In first instance, Cyril's orders for the vestments to be manufactured stemmed from the decision, from the inauguration of Christodulus in 1046, to extend the customary papal consecration ceremony in Alexandria with identical performances in Deir Abu Maqar and Misr. In connection with the introduction of the threefold ceremony as a means to formalize the equal input of the monastic and urban factions in the election of the patriarch, Cyril's decision to keep the set of vestments in Deir Abu Maqar should mainly be regarded as a gesture to perpetuate the monastery's enduring ties with papacy. However, Cyril's establishment in Misr was no less significant in this matter. In retrospect, this move heralded the gradual transfer of the patriarchate to the city, a process completed with the refurbishment of papal compounds in the Church of St Mercurius and the Church of al-Mu'allāqa around the turn of the twelfth century. Understandably, the urbanization of the papal office met with serious resistance

⁸³ *CMS*, 227, fol. 93a.

⁸⁴ *CMS*, 225-226, fols 93a-b. The reconstructions carried out by Christodulus in “the church of my lord Mark” are touched on in the *HPEC* (2.3, 249). Although the report on the fundraising organized by Cyril II could not be properly translated, the reference to “al-Qamga” stands out (2.3, 331).

⁸⁵ Meinardus 1999, 30-35.

⁸⁶ *CMS*, 228, fol. 94b; 237-238, fol. 98b.

⁸⁷ For the Venetian tradition of the transfer of the relics, see Demus 1960, 8-9.

⁸⁸ Swanson 2010, 83-95; Werthmuller 2010.

⁸⁹ *HPEC* 4.1, 138.

⁹⁰ *CMS*, 234, fol. 97a.

⁹¹ CE 5, 1569b; Martin 1998, 46.

from the monks of Deir Abu Maqar, who repeatedly expressed their claim to papacy. The fact that the monastic consecration ceremony was no longer performed after the Cairene *archon* Abu al-'Ula ibn Tarik was installed as Patriarch Gabriel II in 1131 demonstrates that the conservative monks lost out in the competition with the metropolitan community.

A predominant factor in the process of urbanization was the increasing power of the Cairene notables, which surfaced in more ways than one. No other Coptic civic authority embodies the crucial position of the lay faction better than Sheikh Abu al-Fadl ibn Usquf. Not only did he act as the intermediary between church leadership and state authorities, but his commitment to the building of the Church of St George in what was to become the papal compound in the Church of St Mercurius testifies to his involvement in the settlement of the See in Misr. The *HCME* also commemorates Abu al-Fadl for his contributions to the amelioration of the infrastructure of Deir al-Khandaq. It was also here that he erected his funerary church, dedicated to the Virgin. Extensively described in the text, the church and its murals, including the effigies of its founder and his son, demonstrate the great store set by the refurbishment of such "private mausoleums" by the Coptic civic elite.

The description of the portraits of Abu al-Fadl and his son, which were applied in the apse of the *haykal* in which they were buried, reveals another aspect of the manifold duties of *archons*. Given that many Copts acted as deacons in the church they founded or renovated in addition to their daily tasks, one may consider the possibility that this also applied to the two men portrayed here. The location of the paintings in the altar room and the figures' dress, consisting of a white garment and a *ballin*, which we interpret as the diaconal *sticharion* and *orarion*, support this interpretation.

To round off, following the intellectual discourse on the *HCME* as a credible source, we believe that the debates about its authorship, composition, and contents do not seriously dilute the above conclusions. At the same time we realize that our enquiry constitutes just one phase in the ongoing discussions on the authenticity and interpretation of the text. The most important point is, however, that we hope to have demonstrated the great value of an interdisciplinary approach in seeking to answer the many questions.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ABBREVIATIONS

- CME* = Evetts, B.T.A., A.J. Butler (eds) 1895, *The Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and Some Neighbouring Countries attributed to Abû Sâlih, the Armenian*, Oxford.
- CMS* = Samu'il al-Suriany (ed. and transl.) 1992, *History of the Churches and Monasteries in Lower Egypt in the Thirteenth Century*, Cairo.
- HPEC* 2.2 = Atiya, A.S., Y. 'Abd al-Masih, O.H.E. Burmester (ed. and transl.) 1948, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, known as the History of the Holy Church*, Vol. II, Part 2, *Khaël III-Shenouti II (AD 880-1046)*, Cairo.
- HPEC* 2.3 = Atiya, A.S., Y. 'Abd al-Masih, O.H.E. Burmester (ed. and transl.) 1959, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, known as the History of the Holy Church*, Vol. II, Part 3, *Christodoulus-Michael (AD 1046-1102)*, Cairo.
- HPEC* 3.1 = Khater, A., O.H.E. Burmester (ed. and transl.) 1968, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, known as the History of the Holy Church*, Vol. III, Part 1, *Macarius II - John V (AD 1102-1167)*, Cairo.
- HPEC* 3.2 = Khater, A., O.H.E. Burmester (ed. and transl.) 1970, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, known as the History of the Holy Church*, Vol. III, Part 2, *Mark III - John VI (AD 1167-1216)*, Cairo.
- HPEC* 4.1 = Khater, A., O.H.E. Burmester (ed. and transl.) 1974, *History of the Patriarchs of the Egyptian Church, known as the History of the Holy Church, according to MS. arabe 302 Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris, foll. 287v-355r*; Vol. IV, Part 1, *Cyril III (AD 1216-1243)*, Cairo.
- PO* 5.1 = Evetts, B.T.A. 1910, 'History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, III, Agathon - Michael I (766 AD)', *PO* 5, fasc. 1, 3-215.

- Assfalg, J. 1955, *Die Ordnung des Priestertums. Ein altes liturgisches Handbuch der koptischen Kirche*, Cairo.
- 'Awad, F. (ed.) 1908, *Al-Mağmū' al-Ṣafawī*, Cairo.
- Bolman, E.S. 2002, 'Theodore, 'The Writer of Life', and the Program of 1232/1233', in: E. Bolman (ed.), *Monastic Visions. Wall Paintings in the Monastery of St. Antony at the Red Sea*, Cairo/New Haven, 37-76.
- Bolman, E.S. 2008, 'The Medieval Paintings in the Cave Church, Phase Two: Tradition and Transformation', in: W. Lyster (ed.), *The Cave Church of Paul the Hermit at the Monastery of St. Paul, Egypt*, New Haven/London, 179-207.
- Bolman, E. 2011, 'A Donor Portrait and a Painted Gift at the Red Monastery, Sohag, Upper Egypt', in: M.C. Eaton-Krauss, C. Fluck, G.J.M. van Loon (eds), *Egypt 1350 BC – AD 1800. Art Historical and Archeological Studies for Gawdat Gabra*, Wiesbaden, 53-62.
- Brett, M. 2005, 'Badr al-Ġamālī and the Fatimid Renaissance', in: U. Vermeulen, J. Steenbergen (eds), *Egypt and Syria in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Mamluk Eras*, IV, Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA, 61-78 (OLA 140).
- Butler, A.J. 1884, *The Ancient Coptic Churches of Egypt*, Vol. 2, Oxford.

- Casanova, P. 1901, 'Les noms coptes du Caire et localités voisines', *BIFAO* 1, 139-224.
- Catalogue New York 1997, *Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Area, A.D. 843-1261* (H.C. Evans, W.D. Wixom eds), New York.
- Chaîne, M. 1924, 'L'église de Saint-Marc à Alexandrie construite par le patriarche Jean de Samanoud', *Revue de l'Orient Chrétien* 24, 372-386.
- Coquin, Ch. 1974, *Les édifices chrétiens du Vieux-Caire*, Le Caire (Bibliothèque d'études coptes 11).
- Coquin, R.-G. 1975, *Livre de la consécration du sanctuaire de Benjamin*, Le Caire.
- Dadoyan, S.B. 1997, *The Fatimid Armenians: cultural and political interaction in the Near East*, Leiden.
- Demus, O. 1960, *The Church of San Marco in Venice: history, architecture, sculpture*, Washington, DC.
- Dozy, R.P.A. 1845, *Dictionnaire détaillé des noms des vêtements chez les arabes*, Amsterdam.
- Evelyn White, H.G. 1932, *The Monasteries of the Wādī 'n-Natrūn*, Vol. 2, New York.
- Gabra, G., M. Eaton-Kraus 2006, *The Treasures of Coptic Art in the Coptic Museum and Churches of Old Cairo*, Cairo/ New York.
- Grossmann, P. 2001, *Christliche Architektur in Ägypten*, Leiden.
- Hacken, C. ten 2006, 'The Description of Antioch in Abū al-Makārim's *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt and some Neighbouring Countries*', in: K. Ciggaar, M. Metcalf (eds), *East and West in the Medieval Eastern Mediterranean, I. Antioch from the Byzantine Reconquest until the End of the Crusader Principality*, Leuven/Paris/ Walpole, MA, 185-216 (OLA 147).
- Hanna, W.A. (transl.) 1996, *Al Magmou Al-Safawy Ibn Al-Assal*, <http://pharos.bu.edu>.
- Heijer, J. den 1993, 'The Composition of the History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt – Some preliminary remarks', in: D. Johnson (ed.), *Acts of the Fifth International Congress of Coptic Studies Washington 12-15 August 1992*, Vol. 2 Part 1, Rome, 209-219.
- Heijer, J. den 1994, 'The Influence of the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria* on the *History of the Churches and Monasteries of Egypt* by Abū l-Makārim (and Abū Sālih?)', *ParOr* 19, 415-439.
- Heijer, J. den 1996, 'Coptic Historiography in the Fatimid, Ayyubid and Early Mamluk Periods', *Medieval Encounters* 2/1, 67-98.
- Heijer, J. den 1999, 'Considérations sur les communautés chrétiennes en Egypte fatimide: État et Église sous le vizirat de Badr al-Jamali (1074-1094)', in: M. Barrucand (ed.), *L'Egypte fatimide; son art et son histoire, Actes du colloque organisé à Paris les 28, 29 et 30 mai 1998*, Paris, 569-578.
- Heijer, J. den 2002, 'Le patriarcat copte d'Alexandrie à l'époque fatimide', in: C. Décobert (ed.), *Alexandrie médiévale*, 2, Le Caire, 83-97 (Études Alexandrines 8).
- Heijer, J. den 2004, 'Les Patriarches coptes d'origine syrienne', in: R.Y. Ebied, H. Teule (eds), *Studies on the Christian Arabic Heritage in Honour of Father Prof. Dr. Samir Khalil Samir S.I. at the Occasion of his Sixty-Fifth Birthday*, Leuven/Paris/ Dudley, MA, 45-63 (Eastern Christian Studies 5).
- Heijer, J. den 2009, 'Wādī al-Natrūn and the *History of the Patriarchs of Alexandria*', in: M.S.A. Mikhail, M. Moussa (eds), *Christianity and Monasticism in the Wadi al-Natrun. Essays from the 2002 International Symposium of the Saint Mark Foundation and the Saint Shenouda the Archimandrite Coptic Society*, Cairo/New York, 24-42.
- Immerzeel, M. 2009, *Identity Puzzles. Medieval Christian Art in Syria and Lebanon*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA (OLA 184).
- Immerzeel, M. 2012-2013, 'The Renovation of the Churches of Cairo in the Fatimid and Early Ayyubid Periods according to Abu al-Makarim's *Churches and Monasteries of Egypt*', *ECA* 9, 27-52.
- Immerzeel, M. 2017, *The Narrow Way. Art and Identity in the Christian Middle East*, Leuven/Paris/Bristol, CT, (OLA 259).
- Innemée, K.C. 1992, *Ecclesiastical Dress in the Medieval Near East*, Leiden.
- Innemée, K.C. 1998, 'The Iconographical Program of paintings in the Church of al-'Adra in Deir al-Sourian: Some Preliminary Observations', in: M. Krause, S. Schaten (eds), *ΘΕΜΕΛΙΑ: spätantike und koptologische Studien Peter Grossmann zum 65. Geburtstag*, Wiesbaden, 143-154 (SKCO 3).
- Innemée, K.C., L. Van Rompay 2000, 'Deir al-Surian (Egypt): New Discoveries of January 2000', *Hugoye* 3/2, 253-279.
- Kalopissi-Verti, S. 1992, *Dedicatory Inscriptions and Donor Portraits in Thirteenth-Century Churches of Greece*, Wien (Veröffentlichungen der Kommission für die Tabula Imperii Byzantini 5).
- Leroy, J. 1974, *Les manuscrits coptes et coptes-arabes illustrés*, Paris (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 96).
- Lev, Y. 1991, *State and Society in Fatimid Egypt*, Leiden.
- Loon, G.J.M. van 1999, *The Gate of Heaven. Wall Paintings with Old Testament Scenes in the Altar Room and the Hurus of Coptic Churches*, Istanbul (PIHANS 85).
- Malan, S.C. 1873, *A Short History of the Copts and their Church. Translated from the Arabic of Tāqied-Dīn El-Maqrīzī*, London.
- Martin, M. 1998, 'Alexandrie chrétienne à la fin du XIIe siècle d'après Abū el-Makārim', in: C. Décobert, J.-Y. Empereur (eds), *Alexandrie médiévale*, 1, Le Caire, 45-49 (Études Alexandrines 3).
- McKenzie, J. 2007, *The Architecture of Alexandria and Egypt, 300 B.C. - A.D. 700*, London.
- Meinardus, O.F.A. 1989, *Monks and Monasteries of the Egyptian Deserts*, Cairo.
- Meinardus, O.F.A. 1999, *Two Thousand Years of Coptic Christianity*, Cairo.
- Moorsel, P. van 2000, 'Analepsis? Some Patristic Remarks on a Coptic Double-Composition', in: P. van Moorsel, *Called to Egypt. Collected Studies on Painting in Christian Egypt*, Leiden, 97-106 (Publication of the "de Goeje Fund" XXX).
- Mouriki, D. 1984, 'The Wall Paintings of the Church of the Panagia at Moutoullas, Cyprus', in: I. Hutter (ed.), *Byzanz und der Westen. Studien zur Kunst des Europäischen Mittelalters*, Wien, 169-213.

- Riedel, W., W.E. Crum (ed. and transl.) 1973, *The Canons of Athanasius of Alexandria*, Amsterdam.
- Rooijakkers, C.T. 2015, *Dress Norms and Markers: A comparative study of Coptic identity and dress in the past and present*, unpublished PhD dissertation, VU Amsterdam.
- Samir, S.K. 1996, 'The Role of Christians in the Fātimid Government Services of Egypt to the Reign of al-Hāfīz', *Medieval Encounters* 2/1, 177-192.
- Samu'il al-Suriyānī (ed.) 1984, *Ta'rikh al-kanā'is wal-adyirah fī al-qarn al-thānī 'ashar al-milādī h-'Abī al-Makārim*, Cairo.
- Sheehan, P. 2010, *Babylon of Egypt: The Archaeology of Old Cairo and the Origins of the City*, Cairo/New York.
- Sidarus, A. 2002, 'The Copto-Arabic Renaissance in the Middle Ages. Characteristics and Socio-Political Context', *Coptica* 1, 141-160.
- Snelders, B. 2010, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction. Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA (OLA 198).
- Swanson, M.N. 2010, *The Coptic Papacy in Islamic Egypt (641-1517)*, Cairo/New York.
- Werthmuller, K.J. 2010, *Coptic Identity and Ayyubid Politics in Egypt, 1218-1250*, Cairo/New York.
- Woodfin, W.T. 2012, *The Embodied Icon. Liturgical Vestments and Sacramental Power in Byzantium*, Oxford.
- Wüstenfeld, F. (ed. and transl.) 1979, *Macrizi's Geschichte der Copten*, Hildesheim/New York (re-edition from 1843).
- Zanetti, U. 1995, 'Abu l-Makarim et Abu Salih', *BSAC* 34, 85-133.
- Zibawi, M. 2003, *Images de l'Égypte chrétienne. Iconologie copte*, Paris.

The Monastery of St Macarius: Survey and Documentation Work 2009-2012

Karel C. INNEMÉE

A century ago, Hugh Evelyn White, while preparing the text for his monumental publication *The Monasteries of the Wadi 'n Natrûn*, wrote about the archaeological remains he detected in and around the Monastery of St Macarius:

Unfortunately the day for the excavation of these ruins is probably remote, though the light which will then be thrown on Egyptian monasticism is likely to be great. [...] Possibly substantial remains of the VII, VI and even earlier centuries may be brought to light¹.

The Monastery of St Macarius or Deir Abu Maqar is the most southern of the four still inhabited monasteries in the Wadi al-Natrun, the area known as Skeitis in Late Antiquity. For centuries the monastery has taken a prominent place among Coptic monasteries. Many in the list of Coptic patriarchs were recruited from its population and its library must have been a very important one, judging from the many manuscripts that are preserved in libraries all over the world. With the gradual decline of monasticism under the Mamluks and the Ottomans, Deir Abu Maqar also went into a period of decay and dilapidation. The population decreased and the monastery gradually fell into ruins, apart from the central part with the main church, although by the 18th century even of the church only the eastern parts survived. Western travellers have left us accounts about a monastery that was depopulated and half in ruins.

When at the beginning of the 20th century a team from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York started a documentation project of the monasteries in the Wadi al-Natrun, they found a similar situation. Under the patriarchate of Kyrillos VI a monastic revival was begun and in this framework in 1969 father Matta al-Meskeen was sent by the patriarch to the dilapidated monastery. Within a few years the population grew from 6 to 130 monks and during this period the monastery was renovated at rapid

pace. This had as a consequence that many of the old buildings within the perimeter wall were replaced by new constructions, while the wall itself was demolished and replaced by construction consisting of a skeleton of reinforced concrete, filled in with limestone. During the renovation works countless archaeological objects were found, most of which were later stored in a row of glass showcases and in the open air, next to the building that now houses the library of the monastery.

In 2009, 2010, and 2012 a team of Leiden University² has carried out survey work around the monastery. In addition to this, documentation work on the collection of architectural sculptures and other stone implements was done. The aim of these investigations was to gain more insight into the structure and the functioning of the monastery during its most prosperous period, between the 6th and the 11th centuries.

In 2007, during the fieldwork at the site of Deir al-Baramus, Abuna Yuhanna Anba Maqar invited us to come for an informal visit to the site surrounding the perimeter wall of the monastery in order to examine the archaeological remains that were threatened by encroachment of agriculture and the results of illegal digging by individuals from the local population. It was not until 2009 that permission for archaeological fieldwork was granted by the SCA. In June 2009 and January 2010 survey work was done with a Garmin GPS and a Sokkia total station. This survey was concentrated on the area within the new

¹ Evelyn White 1932-1933, III, 51 n. 2.

² Members of the teams during these seasons were Lisa Agaiby, Marlies Bruin, Roderick Geerts, Martin Hense, Karel Innemée (field director), Laurens Jansen, Silva Kluitenberg, Els Kokkelkoren, Hanneke van der Kooij, Liliane Mann, Vincent Oeters, and Pieter Veen. Inspector was Mr. Mohi Bassiouni. Survey work took place. The team wishes to thank Abuna Youhanna Anba Maqar and Abuna (now Anba) Epiphanius for their hospitality and cooperation.

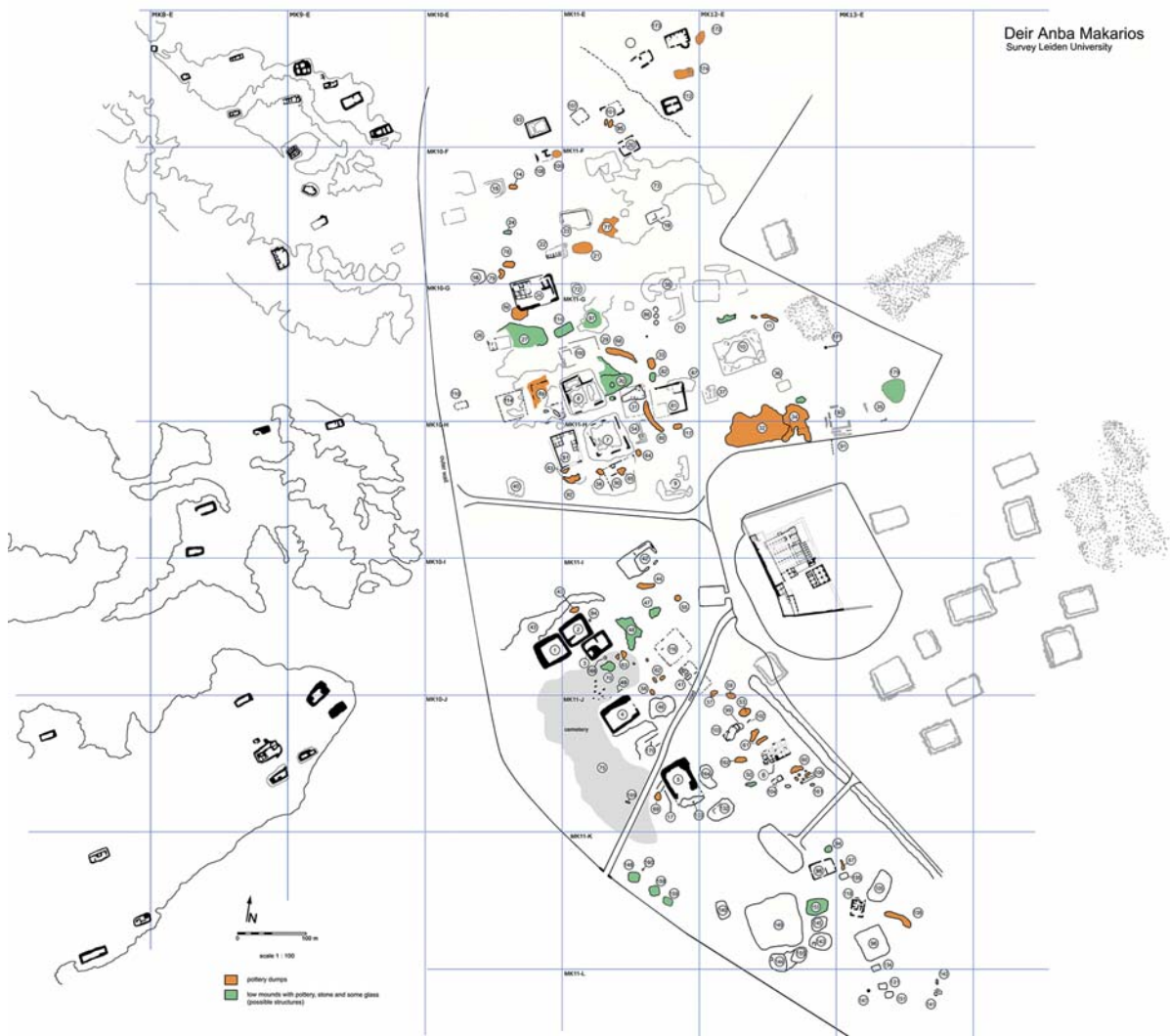


Fig. 1. Survey map (drawing: Martin Hense)

perimeter wall of the monastery covering an area of approximately 2 km² (Fig. 1), with the plan of gradually expanding the range to a radius of 3 km around the core of the present monastery. This final goal has not yet been achieved, due to the fact that since 2011 it became more difficult and eventually impossible to receive security clearance for the area outside the perimeter wall. The objects outside the wall that have been mapped are the results of the data of the preliminary survey in 2007 and the contours that are visible on the satellite photographs of Google Earth and Worldwide Telescope.

³ Satoshi 2006, 450.

A HISTORICAL INTRODUCTION

The Monastery of St Macarius is located in the southernmost part of the geological depression of Wadi al-Natrun. According to tradition, based on the *Vita* of Macarius by the pseudo-Serapion of Tmuis, it was in this area that the desert father spent his last years in search of the seclusion that was no longer to be found in the region of Deir al-Baramus, where he had settled down initially. A cherubim guided the desert father “and he drew him and led him to the top of the rock which is to the south of the marsh, to the west of the well up above (?) the valley”³. What happened around his first cell repeated itself here: followers settled

around him, and formed a community from which the later monastery of St Macarius developed.

The rather informal communities of the 4th century in Wadi al-Natrun were still part of a lay-movement that was gradually brought under supervision and control of the Church. This became a formal fact at the Council of Chalcedon in 451, where a canon was adopted to put bishops in charge over monasteries and anchoritic communities⁴. The ties between the Monastery of St Macarius and the Patriarchate of Alexandria became especially close when the monastery became the patriarchal residence in the middle of the 6th century. Following measures by Emperor Justinian against the anti-Chalcedonians in Alexandria the position of the patriarch became more and more difficult. Churches were confiscated by the Melkites and according to Eutychius⁵ and Maqrizi⁶ many citizens fled to Sketis while Patriarch Theodosius moved his residence to St Macarius' monastery. Since then a considerable number of patriarchs have been elected from the population of monks from this monastery, until the 12th century even the majority by far.

There was little physical evidence so far for the changing position of St Macarius' monastery as mentioned by Eutychius and Maqrizi; the latter wrote his account almost 850 years later, and it is difficult to say how much of their time the anti-Chalcedonian (Coptic) patriarchs really spent in the monastery. We have, however, certain reasons to believe that the monastery grew considerably in size and importance. The anti-Chalcedonian Patriarch Benjamin I (622-661) lived in the period when Heraclius, after having re-conquered Egypt from the Persians in 629, embarked on a violent campaign to subdue the anti-Chalcedonians in Egypt and appointed Cyrus as prefect and patriarch in Alexandria to carry out this task. Benjamin was forced to flee and hide in monasteries in the Fayoum and Upper-Egypt. Between December 18, 645 and January 646 (or 647), when after the Arab conquest the position of the Melkite Church had been reduced considerably, he was asked to consecrate the new church of St Macarius' monastery, a building of apparently impressive size and splendour that was meant to replace the older church that had been built on the top of a nearby hill⁷. It must have been Benjamin himself who supported and fostered the re-development of monasteries, especially St Macarius and his involvement is elaborately described in

the *Book of the Consecration of the Sanctuary of Benjamin* and in the *History of the Patriarchs*. The appearance of Macarius to Benjamin in a vision and, later on, even the hand of God that performed the anointing of the sanctuary underline the importance of the church⁸. The special position of the monastery is also apparent from the fact that here for some time the head of St Mark, the major relic of the Coptic Church, was kept⁹.

After the Arab conquest, when the struggle between Melkites and nationalists played no longer a role, there was in fact no practical reason or necessity anymore for the patriarchs to keep their residence in St Macarius' Monastery, but apparently the honourable position that the monastery had acquired meanwhile was enough reason to keep it as a location where the patriarch would be enthroned and celebrate his first liturgy after his consecration in Alexandria and where he would celebrate Easter¹⁰. In other words, it was no ordinary monastery and the archaeological evidence confirms this.

Like the other monasteries in the Wadi al-Natrun, it must have been an open settlement for centuries, consisting of cells and other buildings, centred around a church and a keep. And just like the other monastic settlements it suffered from Bedouin raids at certain intervals. This, and the fact that the monastery enjoyed a special position as a patriarchal residence and the place where the patriarch would celebrate Easter at least regularly, was a reason for Patriarch Shenouda I to have a defensive perimeter wall constructed in 869:

In his great care for the Holy Desert, he, the father, the patriarch, raised up at the church of Abu Macarius an excellent memorial, for, remembering the deed of the Lord with regard to the monks and the church, he resolved to build a fortified wall round the Catholic church. He did this that it might become a cave and a fortress after the Lord

⁴ Caner 2002, 206.

⁵ Breydy 1985, 87.

⁶ Wüstenfeld 1979, 44.

⁷ Evetts 1948, 505. Evelyn White (1932-1933, II, 271-272) comments on this passage and the possible location of the first church.

⁸ Davis 2004, 126; Coquin 1975; Evetts 1948, 502-518.

⁹ Gabra 2002, 58.

¹⁰ Evelyn White 1932-1933, III, 239-240.

*Christ Who is irresistible. He collected much stone and carried on the work assiduously until it was finished with towers. He made in it dwelling-places and elevated places in the shortest space of time, for he was labouring with the workmen as one of them, and as he had been wont to work when he was steward of the holy monastery, (and) so he did in the completion of this fortress*¹¹.

The special position of the monastery and the regular presence of the patriarch and his entourage was probably also the reason behind the considerable growth in the population: by the 9th century the number of monks may have reached the number of several hundreds¹².

Since the 11th century the population in Deir Abu Maqar apparently declined; by the middle of the century there may have been no more than 400 monks left¹³. This probably has to do with the fact that the monastery was no longer the main residence of patriarchs. From the late tenth century onwards patriarchs resided regularly in the place Damru in the Delta, where Philotheus (979-1003) had built a residence and in 1084 the residence of the patriarch was moved to the Hanging Church in Babylon, in order to be closer to the rulers' new residence in al-Qahira¹⁴. Since then the decline went on and in the 14th century the number of monks was further reduced by a plague and the on-going decline in monastic life. Maqrizi mentions that only a few monks were left and that the monastery is surrounded by ruins¹⁵. This decline in

population apparently had an effect on the state of the architecture. Buildings around the central complex must have gradually fallen into disrepair and were finally ruined. This gradual process of dilapidation can be confirmed by travellers' reports from the 17th century that mention the ruinous state of the monastery¹⁶. Large parts of the main church, that consisted of a multiple nave with four *haykals*, had fallen into disrepair or had collapsed¹⁷.

A first scholarly sign of interest in the monastery and its wider surroundings can be found in the *Description de l'Égypte* by the *savants* of Napoleon, where the monastery is depicted on a schematic map, surrounded by what are indicated as "monastères détruits"¹⁸. Although the map shows little detail and is not very accurate, it seems that the surface of the then inhabited monastery had already been reduced to the size it had at the beginning of the 20th century. Between the time of Napoleon and the time that Evelyn White did his documentation work in the Wadi al-Natrun, little seems to have changed at the site of the monastery, apart from a gradual continuation of the decay.

THE LEIDEN SURVEY OF 2010-2012

Evelyn White published a small but accurate survey map of the area within a radius of approximately 500 meters around the monastery¹⁹, and this was a starting point in the 2010 survey. After projecting this map over the Google Earth photo the accuracy of the map was evident and since the still visible structures coincide exactly with the map of Evelyn White, there is enough reason to believe that the location and outlines of the structures mapped by Evelyn White that have been covered by cultivation in the meantime can be considered accurate as well. Since the re-development of the monastery in the 1970's large areas to the east of the monastery have been cultivated, while most of the area that was originally within the ninth-century perimeter wall has been rebuilt or modernized. The survey therefore concentrated on the sandy area to the west of the monastery, within the modern perimeter wall (Fig. 1).

The method of survey was based on optical observation, followed by mapping by means of a GPS and total station. Many structures are visible at the surface (some walls are still standing up to a height of 4 meters) or can be traced by unevenness in the surface and concentrations of potshards.

¹¹ Severus ibn al-Muqaffa', *History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria*, part 5 <https://sites.google.com/site/demontortoise2000/hist5-htm>, 68.

¹² If it is correct that by the middle of the 11th century the number of monks was 400 (see note 13), then it must have been higher before that time.

¹³ Meinardus 2006, 8, referring to Toussoun 1931, 27.

¹⁴ Den Heijer 2002, 83-97. See also Mat Immerzeel's contribution in the present volume of *ECA*.

¹⁵ Wüstenfeld 1979, 110.

¹⁶ One of them is Jean de Thévenot, who visited the monastery in 1657 (see Lovell 1687, 242).

¹⁷ Evelyn White 1932-1933, III, 48, 86. According to Claude Sicard, who visited the monastery before 1726, the main church, dedicated to St John, was half ruined. Five domes, supported by twenty marble columns, were still standing (see Querbeuf 1780, V, 23-24).

¹⁸ Panckoecke 1823, Pl. 105 (see <http://descegy.bibalex.org/Zoom.html?b=18&v=18&p=46&t=monaster>).

¹⁹ Evelyn White 1932-1933, III, 50-52, Pl. II.

A more refined and detailed continuation of the survey by means of geophysical methods is to be considered for the future. So far an approximate 160 objects have been mapped within the perimeter wall, while an unknown number, minimally 20, but probably more, remains to be surveyed in the wider surroundings. By 'object' is meant any kind of man-made structure, such as underground hermitages, pottery dumps, industrial buildings, cemeteries, and large monastic complexes.

On the basis of surface finds (coins, pottery) and the structures and building materials of walls a general classification and a rough dating can be made. Some of the oldest structures are to be found in the southern part of the site. Here we have mainly rock-cut hermitages of a type that can also be found around the other monasteries, such as Deir al-Baramus (objects 131, 134, 141, 142, 147). Some of these have been cleared of wind-blown sand by monks in recent years in order to be re-used. This unfortunately has obliterated most of the traces of their original occupants. Exceptions are two *manshobiyyas*, which have only been cleared of sand, protected and otherwise left untouched. It is difficult to say when these hermitages have been in use, but the pottery at the surface suggests an occupation between the 6th century or earlier and the 10th century.

From the period of the 5th-7th centuries there are more remains visible at the surface, some of a much more monumental character than the rock-cut dwellings. Object no. 6, also located in the southern part of the site, is a complex mud-brick building, seemingly consisting of two adjacent square buildings. The easternmost of the two is divided in nine rooms and has outer walls of approximately 2 meters thick (Fig. 2). In its plan it shows a striking similarity with the remains of the keep at Deir al-Baramus²⁰. Directly next to it is a second building of similar size, but with a different lay-out in its ground plan. It is tempting to interpret this object as the remains of a tower or keep with a later addition, a place of refuge for the hermits living in the nearby *manshobiyyas*.

Another example of early architecture is a structure that has been given the number 25. It consists of an enclosure wall measuring approximately 25 × 40 meters (Pl. 1). Within this wall, in the north-western corner, the outlines of a building with a complex plan, that occupies about one quarter of the enclosure, are visible. It has about 15 rooms, many of which are decorated with decorative patterns

on the walls (Pl. 2). These or similar patterns, executed in red and yellow ochre, are known from other contexts as well. The nearest place is Deir al-Baramus, where such a decoration was found in a fifth/sixth-century room, west of the church (Pl. 3). The function of the building, of which the walls are apparently preserved up to a height of at least 1 meter, is not yet clear, but it may have had a residential function.

Just south-west of object 25 lies object 26, that must have had a similar lay-out. In this case the remains of the building have been covered by a later pottery dump, suggesting that the building was ruined and levelled already in a remote past, when later buildings were still in use. This hypothesis of a succession of buildings in this area can be confirmed by the remains that are visible slightly more to the south. Objects 7 and 8 are large buildings, with defensive perimeter walls that still stand up to a height of 4 meters. Around these buildings there are clear traces of mud-brick walls, visible at the surface, that continue under these objects 7 and 8. Several other object of a similar structure can be distinguished on the site (objects 1, 2, 4, 5, 10). They have the following characteristics in common: a rectangular plan of approximately 50 × 50 meters, a perimeter wall with a mud-brick core and limestone cladding, an open central courtyard surrounded by domed buildings. Some of these complexes may have had a tower at one of the corners. One of these buildings has been called Deir al-Banat by the local population (no. 8) and because of the fact that parts of the walls are still standing, a tentative reconstruction of the complex can be made (Fig. 3). As in the case of other such walled complexes, considerable parts of the ground-floor level of the buildings have been preserved under wind-blown sand and debris, judging from the fact that the tops of vaults and domes can be seen in several places. Also a number of other domed buildings that do not have a defensive wall seem to be well-preserved under a layer of sand. Object 41, now partly covered by a dirt road leading from the monastery to the western gate in the new perimeter wall, is an example of this.

It is difficult to give a precise dating for what we could consider the second phase of buildings, partly

²⁰ Innemée 2000, 125-129.

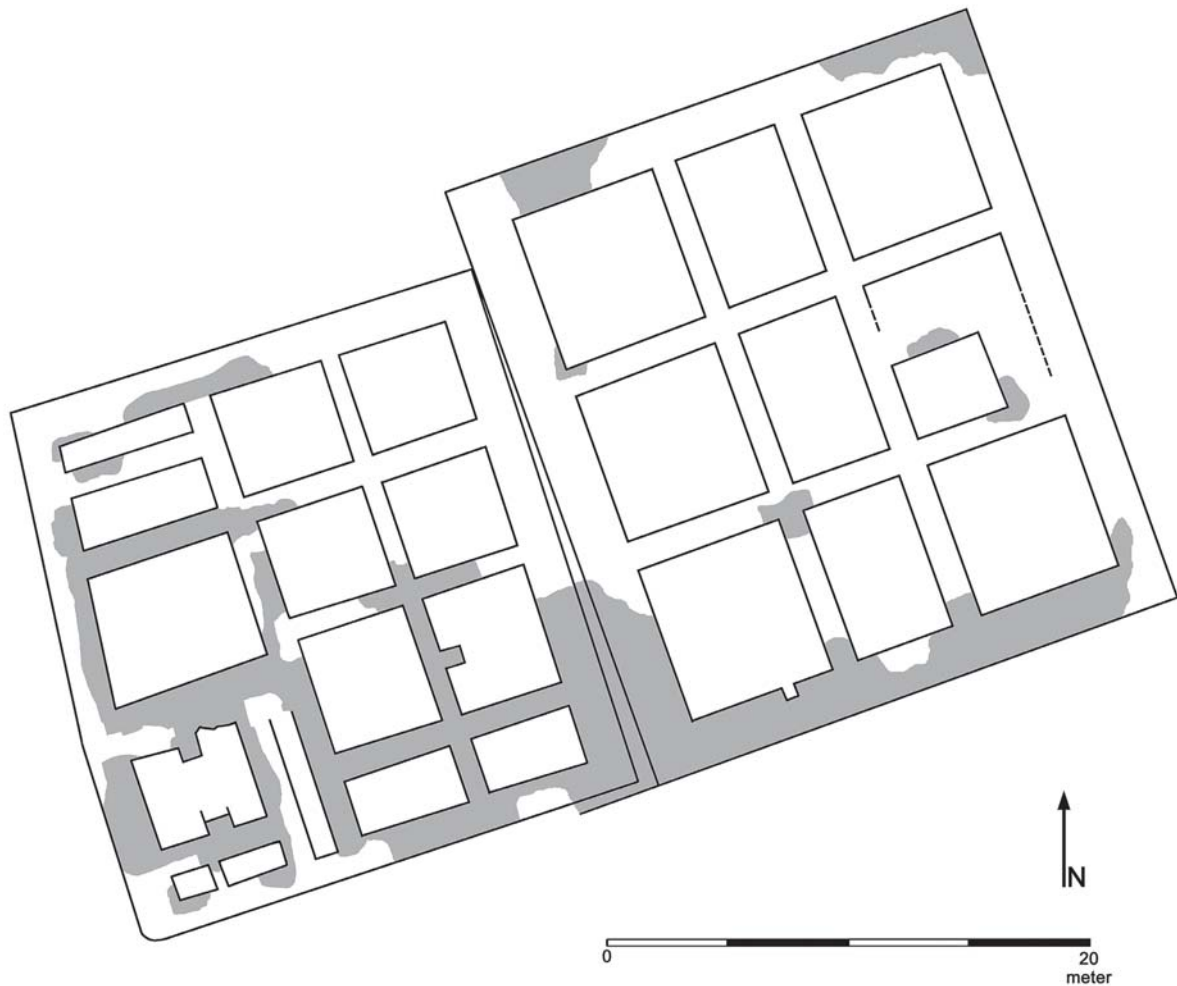


Fig. 2. Object 6, possible remains of a tower (drawing: Martin Hense)

built on the levelled 5th-7th century mud-brick architecture, but since the 9th century seems to be time that the Monastery of St Macarius and possibly the other monasteries in Sketis as well, seems to have been fortified, we should certainly not date these 'satellite' monasteries to the time before the end of the 9th century.

To the east of the present-day Deir Abu Maqar little seems to be left, at least at the surface, of what is indicated as "monastères détruits" on the map in the *Description*. The remains that were mapped by Evelyn White have now completely been obliterated by cultivation, although on the satellite photos differences in the shades of green of the trees seem to indicate the presence of mud-brick walls in the subsoil. Just in one case the presence of a large building could be assessed in the cultivated area: in

2008 monks discovered remains of a building with mural paintings in an area east of the monastery (Pl. 4). These remains have been covered again by sand, but the apparently high groundwater table in this area raises doubts concerning the possibilities of saving the paintings in the future.

As in the case of the other monasteries in the Wadi al-Natrun, *manshobiyyas* have been found in a radius of about three kilometres around the nucleus of the settlement. Some have been mapped, but a more detailed survey in a wider circle remains to be done. The nucleus of the settlement since the middle of the 7th century was doubtlessly the monumental church that was built under Benjamin I. This church must have been enlarged and embellished over the centuries to follow, until from the 17th century or earlier it gradually collapsed as a

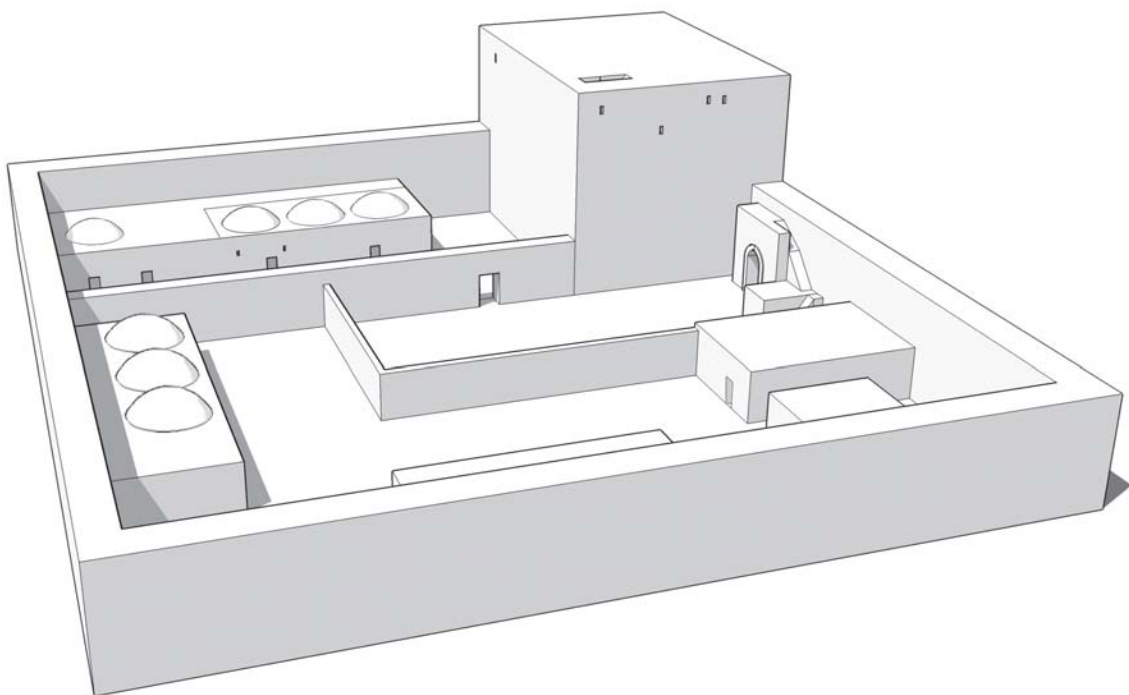


Fig. 3. Object 8 ('Deir al-Banat'), tentative reconstruction (drawing: Martin Hense)

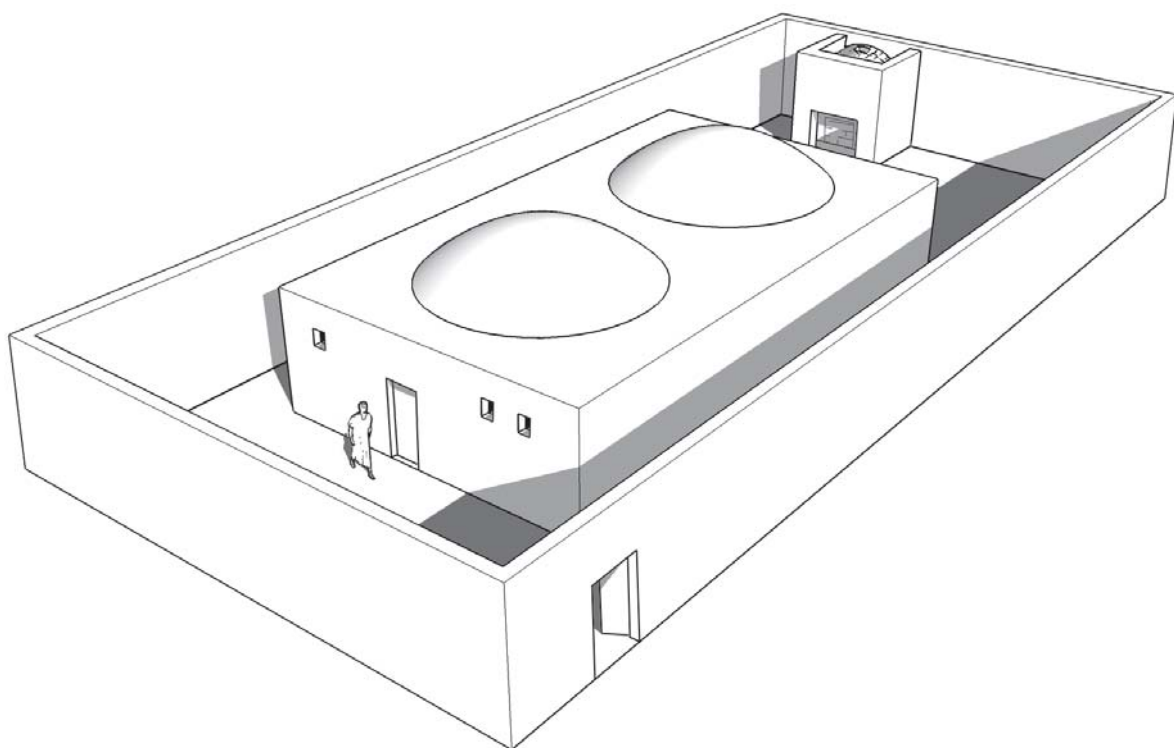
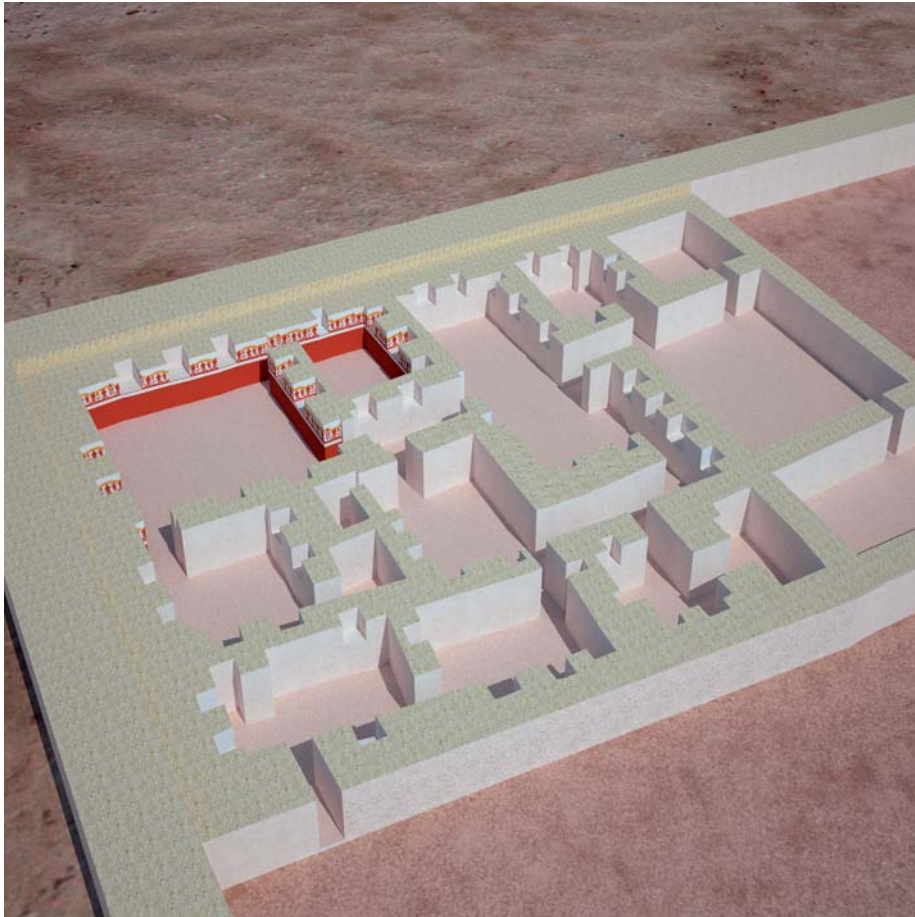


Fig. 4. Object 37, building with industrial function (kiln?), tentative reconstruction (drawing: Martin Hense)



Pl. 1. Object 25, tentative reconstruction (drawing: Martin Hense)



Pl. 2. Object 25, detail of mural decoration (photograph: Karel Innemée)



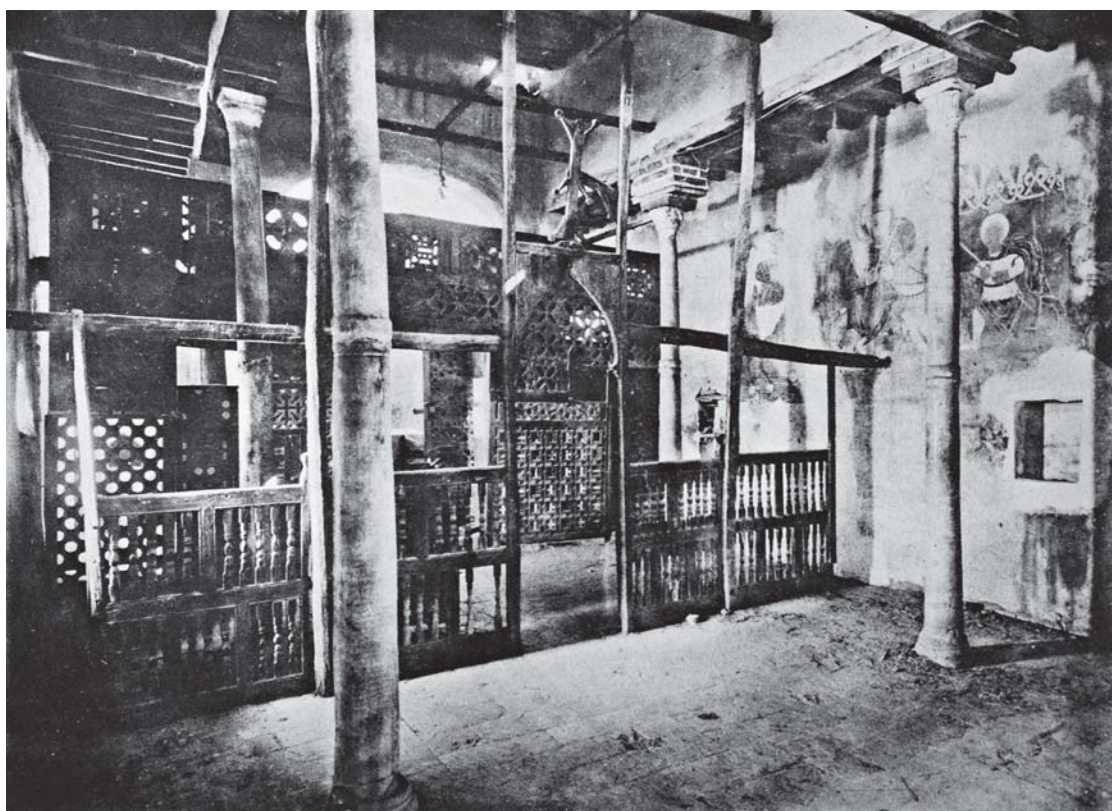
Pl. 3. Deir al-Baramus, fragments of painted plaster (photograph: Karel Innemée)



Pl. 4. Remains of a decorated building (manshobiyyas?), east of the monastery (photograph: Deir Abu Maqar)



Pl. 5. Calcite vessel, found in or near Deir Abu Maqar (photograph: Karel Innemée)



Pl. 6. The Chapel of St Michael in the Keep, situation around 1911 (after Evelyn White 1932-1933, III, Pl. XV)

result of neglect following the depopulation of the monastery. It must have been primarily the church and the adjacent buildings that were surrounded by the wall of Shenouda I. This area was not large enough to house the hundreds of monks that according to the sources were living here. What has been found now during the survey is in fact the evidence that outside of what later was to be called the *kastelliyyah* there were numerous buildings where monks were living and working.

Even after a superficial (in the most literal sense of the word, since only the surface was examined) survey it is clear that the area of the Monastery of St Macarius shows more traces of industrial activities than other monastic sites in Sketis. In the course of the excavation at the site of Deir al-Baramus, no evidence for the production of pottery was found. In contrast, in the direct vicinity of Deir Abu Maqar there is plenty of evidence for industrial activity. At several locations concentrations of ashes and over-fired pottery are indications for the presence of pottery kilns; objects 143 and 144 are examples of this. Object 37 is a rectangular building with the contours of two domes, surrounded by a wall, within this wall there is a kiln with clear traces of pottery production (Fig. 4). A specific kind of pottery that is found on the site and that seems to be the fruit of local production is a kind of flagon, possibly used for holy oil or myron²¹.

Apart from kilns there are a number of locations that show traces of metal industry: ashes and metal slag. Object 118 may have been such a metal workshop. The outlines of the building and the contours of two domes are clearly recognizable and there can be no doubt that this is not an ordinary residential building. Evidence for industrial activities, apart from pottery kilns and small looms, have not been found so far in monasteries in Lower Egypt and this can be taken as another indication that Deir Abu Maqar was not an average monastic settlement.

A large area in the middle part of the site, measuring at least 10.000 square meters, is occupied by a cemetery (object 75). Tombs of different kinds can be distinguished here, ranging from simple burials in the plain sand, to small rectangular structures with remains of elongated domes or vaults on top. At several places burials have been laid bare by wind-erosion. The size of the cemetery, containing at least several hundreds of interments, seems to be

illustrative for the large population that the monastery must have had for a certain period.

SPOLIA AND OTHER ARCHITECTURAL STONE ELEMENTS IN THE MONASTERY

The survey has so far been concentrated on the area within the wider, new perimeter wall of the monastery. Apart from that, the area within the compound of the monastery has been investigated, as far as this is possible after the modernizations that have taken place in the 1970's. The main goal was to make an inventory and description of the various architectural sculptures and other stone implements that are kept in several places. The most important collection of such objects is kept in an open-air storage next to the library. 38 Column shafts or fragments of columns, 68 capitals, 14 column-bases, 18 fragments of *cancelli*-screens, 28 altar- or table-tops or fragments of such tops, 20 balusters (likely to have been used to support the altar-tops), and numerous other stone objects, including at least three basins for the washing of the feet at Maundy Thursday, are indications for the large church complex that has existed within the monastery.

The most remarkable object is a calcite vessel from the pharaonic period (Pl. 5). It may have been brought from Beni Salama, half-way between Deir Abu Maqar and Deir Anba Bishoi, where the remains of a settlement and a temple from the Middle Kingdom are located²². The other stone objects can be roughly sorted in two categories: marble objects imported from the Eastern Mediterranean and locally produced building elements made of calcite or limestone. Most of these objects were found during building and renovation work during the 1970's in the area of the main church and the northern part of the outer wall of the monastery and are most likely to originate from the

²¹ Konstantinidou 2015, 225-243.

²² The vase is difficult to date, since the only parallel found so far is an almost identical vessel in the North Carolina Museum of Art in Raleigh, of which date and provenance are unknown (see Rocheleau 2012, 64-65). Fragments of Middle Kingdom sculpture, probably originating from a temple of Amenemhat I, were found previously in the excavation of Deir al-Baramus (Innemie 2005, 55-68, Figs 1-3).

multiple nave of the main church complex. A second group of objects, mainly column shafts and capitals, has been taken from the Chapel of St Michael in the upper floor of the keep, when its roof construction was completely renewed in the 1970's. A number of these objects could be identified by means of photographs taken of the interior of this chapel during the campaign of Evelyn White (Fig. 10)²³. This former construction of the roof shows a rather haphazard and improvised structure of superimposed column shafts and capitals that were used as column bases and it is not to be excluded that these elements were re-used from the remains of the collapsed main church of the monastery. A more detailed study of these architectural elements could give us some more insight in how we could imagine the church of which now only the eastern part remains.

PRELIMINARY CONCLUSION

On the basis of the outcomes of the survey around Deir Abu Maqar so far we can conclude that the monastery has occupied a special position among the monasteries of Sketis, judging from the great number of architectural remains that surround the present-day monastery. In its heyday, between the 6th and the 11th centuries, the agglomeration of the monastic settlement must have grown to an estimated 2 square kilometres, with a densely built and populated nucleus. The monastery apparently gained this special position due to the fact that it was a temporary place of refuge for the Coptic patriarch between the middle of the 6th century and the Arab conquest. Since then the special ties with the patriarchate remained. Although the patriarch must have spent only a small part of his time in the monastery after this period, the monastery kept its extraordinary position at least until the 11th century. The fact that many patriarchs were elected from the population of the Monastery of St Macarius must have played a role as well in this. The site of Deir Abu Maqar is an important one and further archaeological investigations may be rewarding when it comes to the history of Coptic monasticism in general and its relation with the patriarchate.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Breydy, M. (transl.) 1985, *Das Annalenwerk des Eutychios von Alexandrien: Ausgewählte Geschichten und Legenden kompiliert von Sa'id ibn Batriq um 935 AD*, Louvain (CSCO 472).
- Caner, D.F. 2002, *Wandering, Begging Monks: Spiritual Authority and the Promotion of Monasticism in Late Antiquity*, Berkeley, CA.
- Coquin, R.-G. 1975, *Livre de la consécration du sanctuaire de Benjamin*, Le Caire (Bibliothèque d'études copte 13).
- Davis S.J. 2004, *The Early Coptic Papacy. The Egyptian Church and Its Leadership in Late Antiquity. The Popes of Egypt 1*, Cairo/New York.
- Evelyn White, H.G. 1932-1933, *The Monasteries of the Wādī 'n-Naṭrūn*, 3 vols, New York (reprinted 1973).
- Evetts, B.T.A. 1948, 'History of the Patriarchs of the Coptic Church of Alexandria, II, Peter I to Benjamin I (661)', *PO* I, fasc. 4, 381-519 (reprint of 1910).
- Gabra, G. 2002, *Coptic Monasteries: Egypt's Monastic Art and Architecture*, Cairo.
- Heijer, J. den 2002, 'Le patriarcat copte d'Alexandrie à l'époque fatimide', in: C. Décobert (ed.), *Alexandrie médiévale* 2, Le Caire (Études Alexandrines 8).
- Innemée, K.C. 2000, 'Deir al-Baramus, excavations at the so-called site of Moses the Black 1994-1999', *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 39, 113-135.
- Innemée, K.C. 2005, 'Excavations at Deir al-Baramus 2002-2005', *Bulletin de la Société d'Archéologie Copte* 44, 55-68.
- Konstantinidou, A. 2015, 'A group of 9th century ceramic vessels produced in the monastery of Saint Macarius (Wādī al-Naṭrūn, Egypt)', in: V. Foskolou, P. Petridis (eds), *ΔΑΣΚΑΛΑ: Studies in Honour of Professor Mary Panayotidi-Kesisoglou*, Athens, 225-243.
- Lovell, A. (transl.) 1687, *The Travels Of Monsieur De Thevenot Into The Levant: In Three Parts*, I, Turkey, London.
- Meinardus, O.F.A. 2006, *Monks and Monasteries of the Egyptian Deserts*, Cairo/New York.
- Panckoucke, C.L.F. (ed.) 1823, *Description de l'Égypte*, 8, *État moderne II*, Paris (2nd edn.).
- Querbeuf, Y.M.M.T. (ed.) 1780, *Lettre du Père Sicard, missionnaire en Égypte, à son Altesse Mgr. le Comte de Toulouse (Lettres édifiantes et curieuses; Mémoires du Levant)*, 5 vols, Paris.
- Rocheleau, C.M. 2012, *Ancient Egyptian Art: Systematic Catalogue of the Collection, North Carolina Museum of Art*, Raleigh.
- Satoshi, T. 2006, *Vie de S. Macaire l'Égyptien. Édition et traduction des textes copte et syriaque*, unpublished, PhD dissertation, Leiden University.
- Toussoun, O. 1931, *Étude sur le Wadi Natroun, ses moines et ses couvents*, Alexandrie.
- Wüstenfeld, F. 1979, *Maqrizi's Geschichte der Copten*, Hildesheim (reprint of Göttingen 1845).

²³ Evelyn White 1932-1933, III, Plates IXb and XVa are good examples.

New Light on Syriac Painting in the Eleventh Century: Re-dating British Library Or. 3372

Julian RABY and Sebastian BROCK*

One of the finest surviving illustrated Syriac manuscripts – the Harklean Gospel lectionary in the British Library, MS Or. 3372 – is usually regarded as a witness to the Syriac ‘renaissance’ of the late twelfth and early thirteenth centuries¹. The manuscript is undated, however, and in this article we propose that it was produced almost two centuries earlier than assumed, that its paintings and illumination are contemporary with the manuscript, and that it is a prime example of a vaunted production of manuscripts in the Tur ‘Abdin in the early eleventh century.

The article divides into five sections: the first focuses on the paintings and suggests that the best models for these date from the second half of the tenth century; the second re-examines the colophon; the third considers the relationship between Or. 3372 and two other manuscripts; the fourth looks at the roles of members of the same family in creating these three manuscripts; and the fifth briefly speculates on the broader context of manuscript production in the Tur ‘Abdin in the late tenth and early eleventh century.

1. THE FIGURAL PAINTINGS – ISSUES OF STYLE AND ICONOGRAPHY

Early attempts to date Or. 3372 on paleographic grounds prompted suggestions ranging from the ninth to the twelfth century², but in 1964 Jules Leroy, in his fundamental publication *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures*, argued from the figural paintings for a late twelfth- or thirteenth-century attribution – a conclusion that holds current sway³. The manuscript opens with four pages decorated with a grid of roundels containing an index of lections (Pl. 1; Appendix 1), followed by a page with the depiction of a gold bejewelled cross set in an elaborate frame with carefully graded colours of the spectrum (Pl. 2). This is followed by a double-page opening with the only figurative images in the manuscript. Both halves of this opening are divided

into two pictorial registers, making a total of four scenes: the Nativity, Baptism of Christ (Pl. 4), Entry into Jerusalem, and Four Evangelists (Pl. 3). Leroy described the paintings as among “les plus soignés qui nous soient parvenus”⁴, and the page with depictions of the Nativity and Baptism was one of only two colour illustrations in his book.

However, Leroy’s dating ran counter to his preceding discussion of the paintings’ stylistic and iconographic parallels. It ignored his own evidence and swapped equivocation for assurance. The purpose of this section is to draw attention to these inconsistencies, and to ask whether the stylistic and iconographic evidence points instead to an earlier dating.

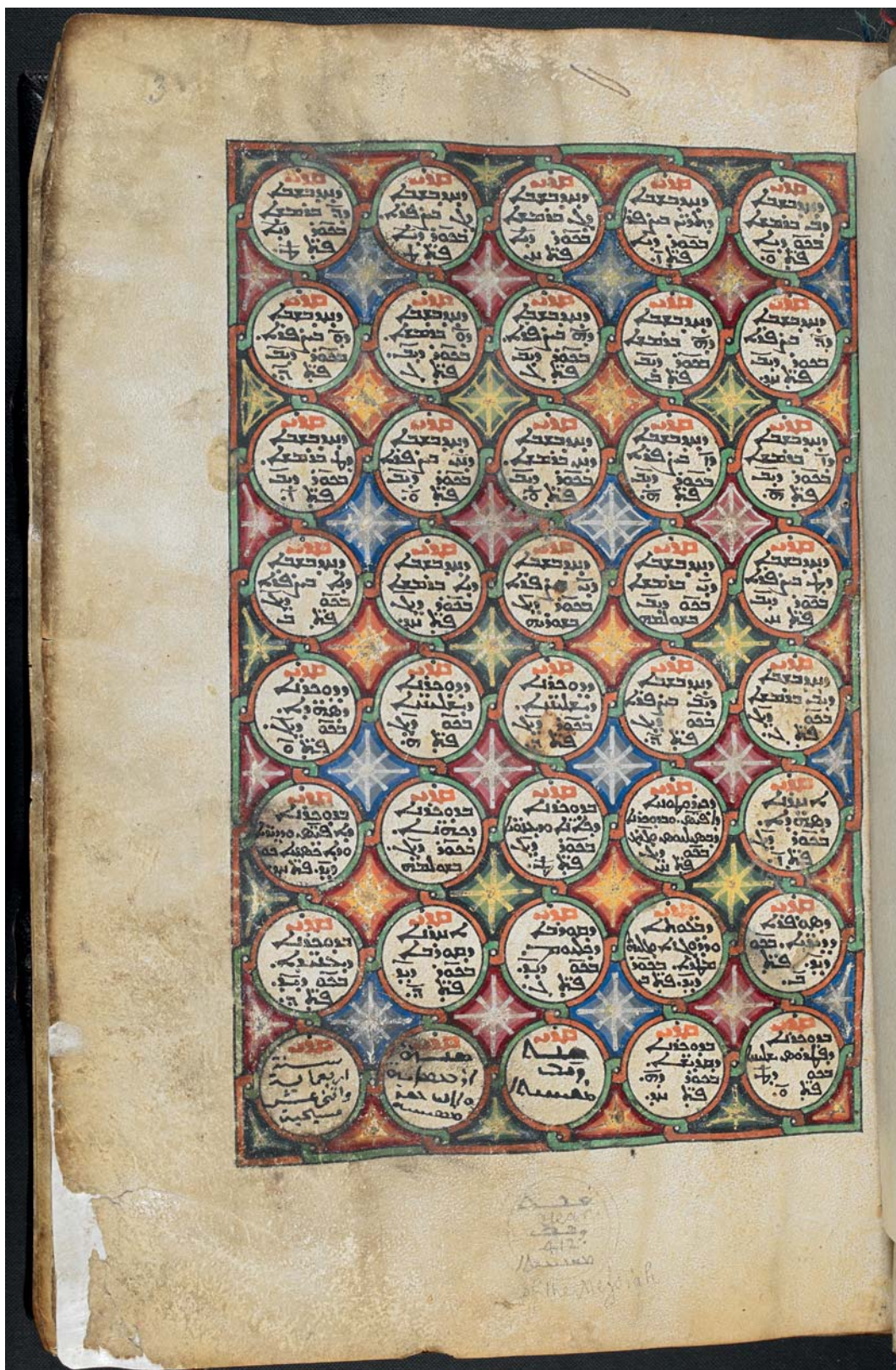
A major reason why Leroy attributed Or. 3372 to the late twelfth or thirteenth century was that he believed that its paintings were stylistically related to Arab illustrated manuscripts of the thirteenth

* We would like to thank Dr Ilana Tahan of the British Library, and Dr Christoph Rauch of the Staatsbibliothek zu Berlin, for their generous help in allowing us to study, respectively, Or. 3372 and Sachau 304. We are most grateful to Dayroyo Dr Roger Akhrass of the Patriarchal Seminary, Ma‘aret Saidnaya, for his kindness in providing us with images of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate MS 12/21; these were taken by the Sisters at Atshaneh, to whom we also express our gratitude for the information in Table 1, below. We are most grateful to the authorities of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate for their permission to publish these images.
¹ For this period of efflorescence, see now Teule/Fotescu Tauwinkl 2010.

² Lee/Renouard 1831, 22, no. 113: “An Evangelistarium, or Lectionary, in a fine Estrangelo Character, with Illuminations; and Marginal Readings in Greek: transcribed, probably, in the ninth century”. Margoliouth 1899, 16: “probably of the xiith century”. According to Hugo Buchthal and Otto Kurz (1942, 17, no. 43), Johan Jakob Tikkanen (1933) also attributed it to the twelfth century, though with a question mark.

³ Leroy 1964, 261-267. Followed by, for example, Schneider 1973; Hunt 1985, 130; Smine 1993, 200; Snelders 2010, 393.

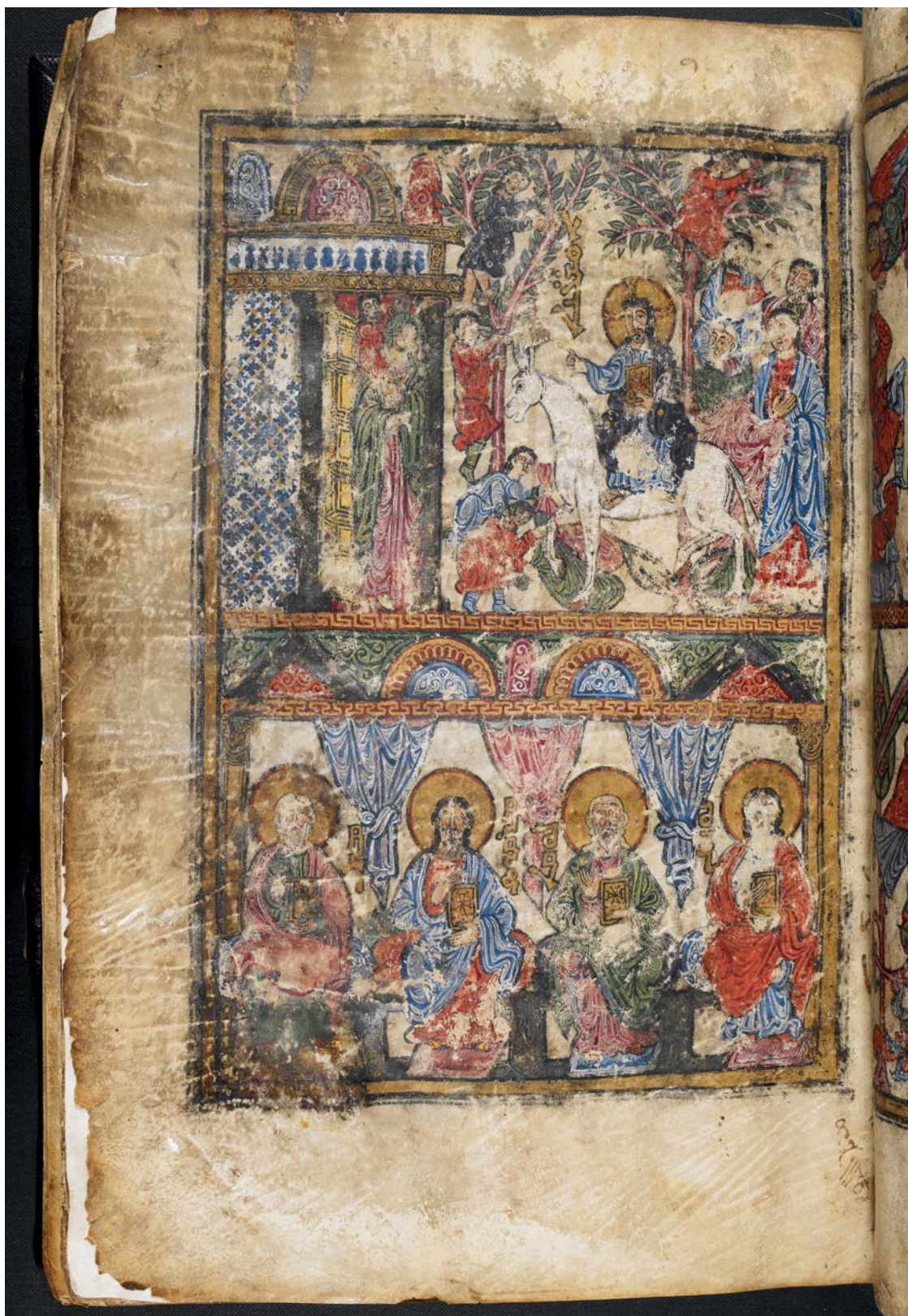
⁴ Leroy 1964, 263.



Pl. 1. Index of lections (the final three had originally been left blank); London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 3a (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 2. Cross-page; London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 3b (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 3. *Entry into Jerusalem and Four Evangelists*; London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 5a
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 4. Nativity and Baptism of Christ; London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 4b
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)

century. There are, however, numerous objections to his arguments, the two most significant of which are that none of the five stylistic elements he adduces points to a thirteenth-century date for Or. 3372, and that there are marked differences between Or. 3372 and the principal Syriac manuscripts of the thirteenth century which do evince a connection with Arab painting⁵.

Leroy's dating was based on this putative stylistic connection with Arab painting and on his conviction that the iconographic prototypes were predominantly late twelfth-century Byzantine, though

he provided little support for dating them so late. He argued that the scene of the Four Evangelists was derived from a Greek prototype, since the figures are arranged with Matthew on the left and John on the right, reading left to right as in Greek script (Pl. 3). Leroy admitted, however, that a grouping of four evangelists on the same page is rare in Byzantine painting. While he noted that such a grouping occurs in Early Christian art, for example in the Rossano Gospels, he overlooked its frequent occurrence in Armenian painting from the late tenth century on⁶. As for the three narrative scenes, detailed iconographic precedents were well established by the tenth century, and it is unclear why Leroy opted for the late twelfth.

The Nativity lacks the customary Washing of the Child by the midwife or midwives (Pl. 5). It otherwise conflates imagery commonly connected with the Nativity and the Epiphany, including an Adoration of the Magi and an Adoration of the Shepherds, here represented by a single figure and three of his flock. It belongs to what Earl Baldwin Smith termed the 'Byzantine Liturgical Type' of the Nativity, one of the earliest extant examples of which occurs in the first decades of the eleventh century, in the mosaics of Hosios Loukas⁷.

In Or. 3372 the Christ Child is not placed in a cave but on a brick or masonry plinth behind the Virgin, and is illuminated by a shaft of golden light that descends from a segmented circle of sky⁸. This accords with a Middle Byzantine model, while the plinth and several other elements can be found in pre-iconoclastic antecedents, notably the Sancta Sanctorum reliquary box⁹. The two angels standing behind the plinth in Or. 3372 is an unusual feature, though a parallel occurs in the *Menologion* of Basil II, which has been dated to the late tenth or early eleventh century (Pl. 6)¹⁰. There are, though, differences between the Nativity scene in this *Menologion* and that in Or. 3372¹¹. Notable among these is the placement and posture of the Virgin: in the *Menologion* she is seated upright to the left of the plinth, whereas in Or. 3372 she adopts a semi-reclining pose on a mattress to the right of the composition, and she looks behind over her left shoulder (Pl. 9). This pose is best paralleled in the so-called Phokas Lectionary in the Skevophylakion of the Monastery of Great Lavra on Mount Athos, which Kurt Weitzmann attributed to eleventh-century Constantinople, though others have dated it to the twelfth century (Pls 7-8)¹². These differences

⁵ Leroy's claims and the relationship with Arab painting will be addressed in a separate article by Julian Raby.

⁶ Leroy 1964, 265 n. 2. The Four Evangelists occur on the same page, but standing rather than seated, in an eleventh-century Byzantine evangeliary in the Vatican (Buchthal 1957, Pl. 142, cf. 26, Pl. 40). For numerous Armenian examples of the Four Evangelists depicted standing on the same page, see the census of manuscripts in the Index of Armenian Art: http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/iaa_miniaures/ms_list.aspx. See also Nordenfalk 1968, 125; Schapiro 1973, 498-499. For two Syriac examples of the Four Evangelists shown seated on the same page, see Leroy 1964, Pl. 57.2 (Paris, BnF Syr. 356), and the fragmentary gospel-book formerly in the Kevorkian Collections (Hunt 2001; for a colour image: Fogg 1989, cat. no. 1). Our thanks to Sam Fogg for providing a copy of this publication. For the use of curtains on templon screens in the Tur 'Abdin region, see Szymaszek 2012-2013. We owe this reference to the kindness of Dr Mat Immerzeel.

⁷ Baldwin Smith 1918, 58-59.

⁸ The painter has not understood how to depict the angled return of the plinth, and the masonry extends beyond the top of the plinth.

⁹ This scene on the Sancta Sanctorum box includes other comparanda, such as the pose of Joseph, and the mattress on which the Virgin rests, while the scene of the Baptism includes the semicircle of sky with the *manus dei* and the descending dove (Morey 1926; Cristina Pantanella in Bagnoli/Klein/Mann 2011, 36-37, cat. no. 13, and plate on p. 4).

¹⁰ Vatican, Biblioteca Apostolica Vaticana, Vat. Gr. 1613: Der Nersessian 1940-1941, 104-125; Ševčenko 1962, 245-276; *idem* 1972, 241-249; Zakharova 2011, 131-153, esp. 152.

¹¹ The Nativity in this *Menologion* does not include the magi, who occupy a separate illustration unrelated to the image in Or. 3372.

¹² In Or. 3372 the Virgin has her front leg straight and her far leg acutely bent, a feature that occurs in Basil II's *Menologion* but not in the Lavra manuscript. This posture also occurs in the Nativity scene from the Salerno antependium from c. 1084. In Or. 3372 Joseph sits on a wooden stool, which is closer to the iconography in the Phokas Lectionary than in the *Menologion*. For the Phokas Lectionary, see Weitzmann 1936; *idem* 1971, esp. 632-633. On the Nativity scene, see Buchthal 1939, 138. On a late eleventh or early twelfth century date, see Zakharova 2005, 178 n. 30, with references. For a proposed dating in the second quarter of the twelfth century, see Anderson 1992, 98.



Pl. 5. Nativity; London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 4b (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 6. Nativity; Menologion of Basil II; Vatican City, Gr. 1613, p. 271 (Courtesy of the Vatican Library, via Wikimedia Commons)



*Pl. 7. Nativity; Phokas Lectionary; Mount Athos, Monastery of Great Lavra, Skevophylakion, fol. 114b
(after Galavaris 1995, Pl. 120)*



Pl. 8. Detail of Pl. 7.



Pl. 9. Detail of Pl. 5.



Pl. 10. *Baptism of Christ*; London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 4b
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)

are not sufficient, however, to suggest that the Nativity in Or. 3372 is late twelfth century, by which time the scene usually included the magi appearing on horseback at the top left, as in the mosaics of the Capella Palatina in Palermo, datable to the 1140s¹³.

The Baptism in Or. 3372 accords to one of the three principal early variants of this scene, in which the River Jordan resembles a vertical cone of water, with no hint of surrounding terrain or attempt at perspective (Pl. 10)¹⁴.

Iconographic details in the Entry into Jerusalem in Or. 3372 – such as Christ riding side saddle followed by a crowd of disciples; boys climbing a tree to remove the branches; two boys spreading a garment in the path of the ass; and a figure before the city gates carrying a child on the shoulder – can all be found in a well-known ivory of the so-called

Painterly Group which is attributed to Constantinople and dated to the mid or second half of the tenth century, and which Weitzmann believed reflected the imagery of a tenth-century imperial lectionary (Pls 11-12)¹⁵.

¹³ Schiller 1971, 65, Fig. 159. For a thirteenth-century example of the magi riding in from the top left that is from a Syriac milieu, almost certainly Mosul, see the Freer 'canteen' (Ecker/Fitzherbert 2012, Figs 1, 9).

¹⁴ Schiller 1971, 134-136. This type was dubbed the 'Capadocian' by Gabriel Millet. Leroy does not explain why he assigned a twelfth-century date; he may have been thinking of earlier studies such as Josef Strzygowski's axiom that three angels did not occur in Baptism scenes until the twelfth century, though Millet had already shown that a trinity of angels appears as early as the ninth, and occurs in several manuscripts of the tenth century (Strzygowski 1885; Millet 1916, 170-215, esp. 172; cf. Baldwin Smith 1918, 71-84).



Pl. 11. Entry into Jerusalem (detail of Pl. 3; reversed); London, British Library, Or.3372, fol. 5a (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 12. Entry into Jerusalem; Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst inv. no. 1590 (© Skulpturensammlung und Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, Staatliche Museen zu Berlin - Preussischer Kulturbesitz / photographer: Jürgen Liepe)

The iconographic evidence does not, then, support Leroy's late date for Or. 3372. On the contrary, the best Byzantine parallels are from the second half of the tenth century. The division of the page into two vertical registers, with a thick gold border framing the paintings and separating the registers, harks back even earlier, as it occurs in the Paris copy of the *Homilies* of Gregory Nazianzus (Gr. 510), which has been dated to between 879 and 883¹⁶. By the Middle Byzantine period this division of the page was obsolete, and in Syriac painting recurs only rarely, a notable instance being in Berlin Staatsbibliothek Sachau 304 (Pl. 27), a manuscript intimately connected to Or. 3372¹⁷.

While Or. 3372 might have depended on a single, now lost, Byzantine model of the second half of the tenth century, it seems more of a provincial fusion of Byzantine models and local taste. A tendency towards bilateral symmetry is not typical of metropolitan Byzantine miniatures, and the Nativity in Or. 3372 has a stiff monumentality more readily associated with provincial wall painting. This formality is evident in the symmetrical arrangement of the angels in both the Nativity and the Baptism scenes in Or. 3372 (Pl. 4). The arrangement seems to have been dictated not by the developing codes of Middle Byzantine iconography, but by the predilections of the painter of Or. 3372. He liked flying angels, and he opted for both horizontal symmetry within a scene and vertical contrast between the two registers. In both registers there are flying angels symmetrically disposed: in the upper the angels swoop downwards and outwards, in the lower they rise upwards and inwards¹⁸. An emphasis on symmetry is also evident in the placement of two trees, one at either end of the image, and it is worth noting that the monastery where Or. 3372 may well have been produced – Mar Gabriel – still preserves an early mosaic in which two trees flank a ciborium¹⁹.

Even this cursory review of the art-historical evidence supports our first impression – that the figural paintings of Or. 3372 have been dated too late. An earlier dating is also suggested by the rendering of the cross at the beginning of the volume (Pl. 2), as it differs from most other Syriac cross pages in two respects: one, the cross is not rendered in a mosaic of colours, but treated as if it were a gold and jewelled object (*crux gemmata*); two, the 'spec-

trum' colouring is composed of overlapping rhomb shapes rather than juxtaposed square tesserae. It is not, therefore, the 'mosaic cross' typical of Syriac

¹⁵ Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, inv. no. 1590: Goldschmidt/Weitzmann 1930-1934, II, 25, cat. no. 3, Pl. I.3; Catalogue New York 1997, 153-154, no. 99; Weitzmann 1971, 625-626, Fig. 6. For an assessment of Weitzmann's theory, see Zakharova 2005, a reference we owe to the kindness of Robert Nelson. The adult carrying a child is a female in the Berlin ivory, a male in Or. 3372. Christ's rather 'mannered' contrapposto pose does not occur in Or. 3372, which depicts Christ more as he is shown on the scene of the Entry into Jerusalem on one of the leaves of a tenth-century ivory triptych in Paris from the 'Painterly Group' (Goldschmidt/Weitzmann 1930-1934, II, 25, cat. no. 4, Pl. II.4); cf. the ivory in the British Museum (Dalton 1909, no. 23, Pl. XIV; Goldschmidt/Weitzmann 1930-1934, II, 74, cat. no. 200, Pl. LXVI). However, the contrapposto pose of the boy at the top of the tree on the Berlin ivory is echoed in Or. 3372. Above the city walls on the Berlin ivory of the Entry into Jerusalem are small-scale buildings, which do not resemble the treatment in Or. 3372. However, another ivory of the 'Painterly Group', which depicts the Raising of Lazarus, has architecture with domes (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, inv. no. 598: Goldschmidt/Weitzmann 1930-1934, II, 28, cat. no. 14, Pl. IV.14). A closer parallel for the domes can be found on the so-called sceptre of Leo VI (r. 886-912), where there is some variation in the width of the domes, though it is not as extreme as in Or. 3372 (Staatliche Museen zu Berlin, Museum für Byzantinische Kunst, inv. no. 2006: Goldschmidt/Weitzmann, 1930-1934, II, 52-53, cat. no. 88, Pl. XXXV). Kathleen Corrigan (1978) places much store on its being a sceptre, though the museum identifies the object as the handle of a comb. For a wide-ranging discussion of the Entry into Jerusalem in Syriac manuscripts, see Schapiro 1973, 504-508.

¹⁶ Brubaker 1985.

¹⁷ It occurs also in BL Add. 7169 (Leroy 1964, 350-366; Pl. 122.1; *idem* 1975-1976, Fig. 1), for which see below, note 68. Another example of paintings in two registers can be found in the Deir es-Za'faran evangeliary (Leroy 1964, Pl. 131.2). A similar division of the painted page occurs in the probably late tenth-century Armenian manuscript MS 697 in the Mekhitarist Library in Vienna (Buschhausen/Buschhausen 1981), and in the 'Second Etchmiadzin Gospels' in Jerusalem (MS 2555), also attributed to the late tenth century (Buschhausen/Buschhausen 1981, 32).

¹⁸ A pair of swooping angels occurs on the tenth-century Munich ivory of the *koimesis* (Goldschmidt/Weitzmann 1930-1934, II, 25, cat. no. 1, Pl. I.1), and in eleventh-century copies of Gregory's *Homilies*, though Christopher Walter (1971, 207) has emphasized how rare this theme is in Byzantine Baptism scenes.

¹⁹ Hawkins/Mundell/Mango 1973. Bilateral symmetry is a feature of some Byzantine ivories depicting the Ascension of Christ.

manuscripts from the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries²⁰. The use of rhombs to create a 'spectral' colouring is, by contrast, a feature found in the treatment of the arches in some canon tables in tenth- and eleventh-century Armenian manuscripts, and in the border of a miniature in the late ninth- or early tenth-century Byzantine evangeliary Vat. Gr. 1522²¹.

An earlier dating suggested for Or. 3372 by the pictorial evidence is now confirmed by Sebastian Brock's re-reading of the colophon which indicates that the manuscript was produced in the first half of the eleventh century, probably in Tur 'Abdin²².

2. THE SCRIBE EMMANUEL

A re-examination of the script – an elegant and beautifully regular *Estrangelo* (Pls 13-14) – turns out to be of no immediate assistance in adjudicating on the date of the manuscript, given that examples of it can be found from the early eleventh to the thirteenth century, with hardly any difference over time. Much more productive is a reconsideration of

the colophon, with its mention of the scribe Emmanuel, and his two brothers who "had laboured with him in the illustration (*b-surteh*) and binding of the manuscript." Their names are given as Petros and Nihe, though Leroy misread the latter as Aha. Neither name is particularly common, and so the identification of Emmanuel, Petros, and Nihe as the three brothers with these names mentioned by Barhebraeus (1226-1286) in his *Ecclesiastical History* can be considered certain. Ironically, Leroy gave a reference to the passage in Barhebraeus, but, perhaps due to his misreading of the name Nihe as Aha, he did not go on to make the link between it and the colophon²³.

The connection can best be seen by juxtaposing the colophon (Pl. 15), which is written in a much smaller script than the main text, with the passage in Barhebraeus:

BL Or. 3372, fol. 135b

There wrote this book of Lections of the Holy Gospel Emmanuel the sinner, nominally a monk. Let everyone who comes across (it) pray for him, and for Petros, the priest and monk, and Mar (?) Nihe,²⁴ the secular priest, his brothers, who laboured with him in the illumination of this book, and in its binding.

Barhebraeus, Chronicon Ecclesiasticum (ed. Abbeloos/Lamy 1872-1877, I, cols 417-419)²⁵

*Patriarch Athanasius consecrated John bishop of the Monastery of Qartmin in 1299 of the Greeks [A.D. 987/88], and he renewed the writing of estrangelo in Tur 'Abdin that had been out of use for a hundred years. He learnt it from example(s) in books, and he taught it to his nephews. Perfect grace was granted to Emmanuel in writing, and in illumination (*ṣayyaruteh*) to his brother Nihe. The bishop sent Petros their brother to Melitene, and he purchased parchment. Rabban Emmanuel wrote seventy bound volumes of the Peshitta, Syrohexapla and Harklean, and a volume of mimre in three columns. He donated the books, which have no comparison in the world, to the Monastery of Qartmin.*

The passage in Barhebraeus calls for a few comments. One is that the Peshitta, Syrohexapla, and Harklean manuscripts are all likely to have been lectionaries using these biblical versions. Second, John was in fact bishop of Tur 'Abdin, and not just the Monastery of Qartmin, from which this notice

²⁰ This cross is overlooked in Leroy's discussion of Or. 3372. Another example of this form of gold, bejewelled cross in a Syriac manuscript occurs in the enigmatic BL Add. 7169, which also has a cross in the 'mosaic' style and a braided border; the manuscript is possibly from the Tur 'Abdin (Leroy 1964, 124, Pls 9.1, 10.1; and see note 68, below). On crosses in other Syriac manuscripts, see Leroy 1964, 113-119, Pls 4-9; Hunt 1991, Figs 18, 28.

²¹ See, for example, the late tenth-century Mekhitarist Vienna MS 697, fol. 1a (Buschhausen/Buschhausen 1981, Abb. 35); Matenadaran cod. 2374, fol. 6a (dated A.D. 989), and the King Gagik Gospels, probably second quarter of the eleventh century (Jerusalem, Treasury of St James, MS 2556). For Vat. Gr. 1522, see d'Aiuto/Morello/Piazzoni 2000, 200. We would like to thank Professor Robert Nelson for this reference. Rhombs are, however, also used for the border of the roundel enclosing a cross in Sachau 322, which is dated to A.D. 1240/41 (Leroy 1964, Pl. 6; Catalogue New York 2016, 271, cat. no. 172). On this manuscript, see below notes 33-37 and Appendix 2.

²² There is no iconographic or codicological evidence that the illuminated pages were subsequent additions. The cross page is on the verso (fol. 3b) of the last page of the lections (fol. 3a; Pls 1-2).

²³ A considerable number of *Garshuni* notes by 'visitors' who had viewed the manuscript are to be found on folios 4r and 142r, several of which are dated; one of these indicates that the manuscript was already in Aleppo in 1538, the place where it was purchased in 1826.

²⁴ For this name and its variants, see Palmer 1986, 58-61.

²⁵ Another English translation can be found in Palmer 1986, 53.

in Barhebraeus is likely ultimately to derive. John's diocese is clear from the list of episcopal consecrations by Patriarch Athanasius Salhoyo (October 986-1002/03) given by Michael the Syrian at the end of his *Chronicle*²⁶, although, according to Andrew Palmer, a date of c. 986 for John's episcopal consecration may be about a decade too early²⁷. Third, Palmer has made an illuminating study on the background to this revival of *Estrangelo* script mentioned by Barhebraeus, proposing that it originated in the Melitene area, a topic we shall return to in Section 5²⁸.

3. OTHER MANUSCRIPTS COPIED BY EMMANUEL

Of the seventy manuscripts Barhebraeus claimed Emmanuel copied and donated to Qartmin Monastery, only seventeen seem to have been left in 1169 (when they were rebound)²⁹. Today, besides Or. 3372, only one other manuscript, currently at the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate in Damascus (Ma'arret Saidnaya), is known that was definitely copied by Emmanuel, while uncertainty has surrounded another, now in Berlin, as it bears a later attribution to him.

Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, MS 12/21

This is a Gospel lectionary dated November A.D. 1041. The manuscript, which lacks the first twelve quires, was formerly in Deir el-Za'faran. The colophon, on fols 201b and 202a, is in three sections, the first definitely, and the third (in the same script) very probably by Emmanuel, while the second is in a different, early *Serto*, hand (Pls 16-17). Philoxinos Yuhanna Dolabany and Ignatius Aphrem Barsaum gave the information from the colophon as follows³⁰:

Colophon 1

There wrote this book of separate lections of the holy Gospel, Emmanuel the sinner, nominally a monk, deacon, nephew of John, bishop of the holy monastery of Qartmin (Q'RTMYN) and of Tur Abdin (BDYN). Let everyone who encounters and reads (it) pray for him for our Lord's sake, and for his parents, and for Petros, monk and priest, his brother in both body and spirit (pagranaya kit w-ruhanaya), who toiled over the ornamentation (b-pa'yuteh) of this book and its binding.

Colophon 2

It was written in the holy monastery (just) mentioned, and collated twice against accurate copies. It was completed in the year one thousand three hundred and fifty three of the Greeks, and by (the reckoning) of the Muslims (Tayyaye), four hundred and thirty three, on Tuesday, Latter Teshri (November).

Colophon 3

In two framed columns on fol. 202a (Pl. 16); the first column, of thirty-six lines, gives in florid prose the pious purposes for which Deacon Theodore commissioned the manuscript:

...There laid down this treasure full of lasting and spiritual life, I mean, the syntaxis, or ordering of Gospel Lections of the entire crowning cycle of the year in the holy and godly, that is, catholicos' church in Tagrit, the city of God and Metropolis of the East, I mean the church known as 'new', (dedicated) to the name of the Bearer of God and of the Twelve holy Apostles, and of Mar Ahudemme, the holy apostle and martyr, which had been previously built through the godly provision and as a result of the labour of his hands, Theodoros Ihibo the deacon, son of Marqos, son of Yuhanon, in the days of the wakeful and eager Pastor, Mar Baselios the Fourth³¹, metropolitan of the city and of all the eastern region.

²⁶ Chabot 1899-1910, III, 468.

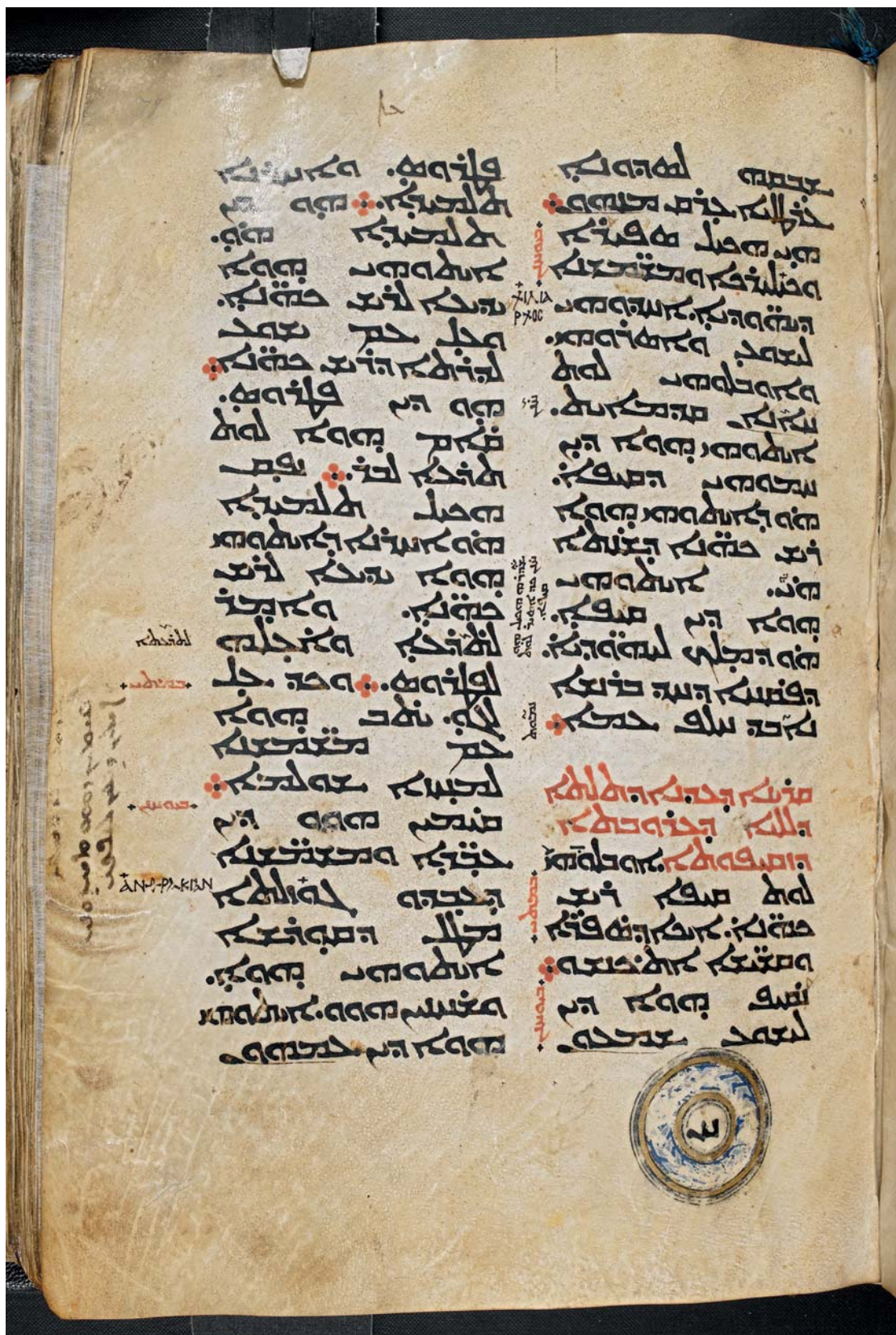
²⁷ Palmer (1986, 53) does not give a reason for suggesting a later date, but it is perhaps because his name comes quite late in the list of episcopal consecrations by Patriarch Athanasius.

²⁸ Palmer 1986; *idem* 1989, 68-89.

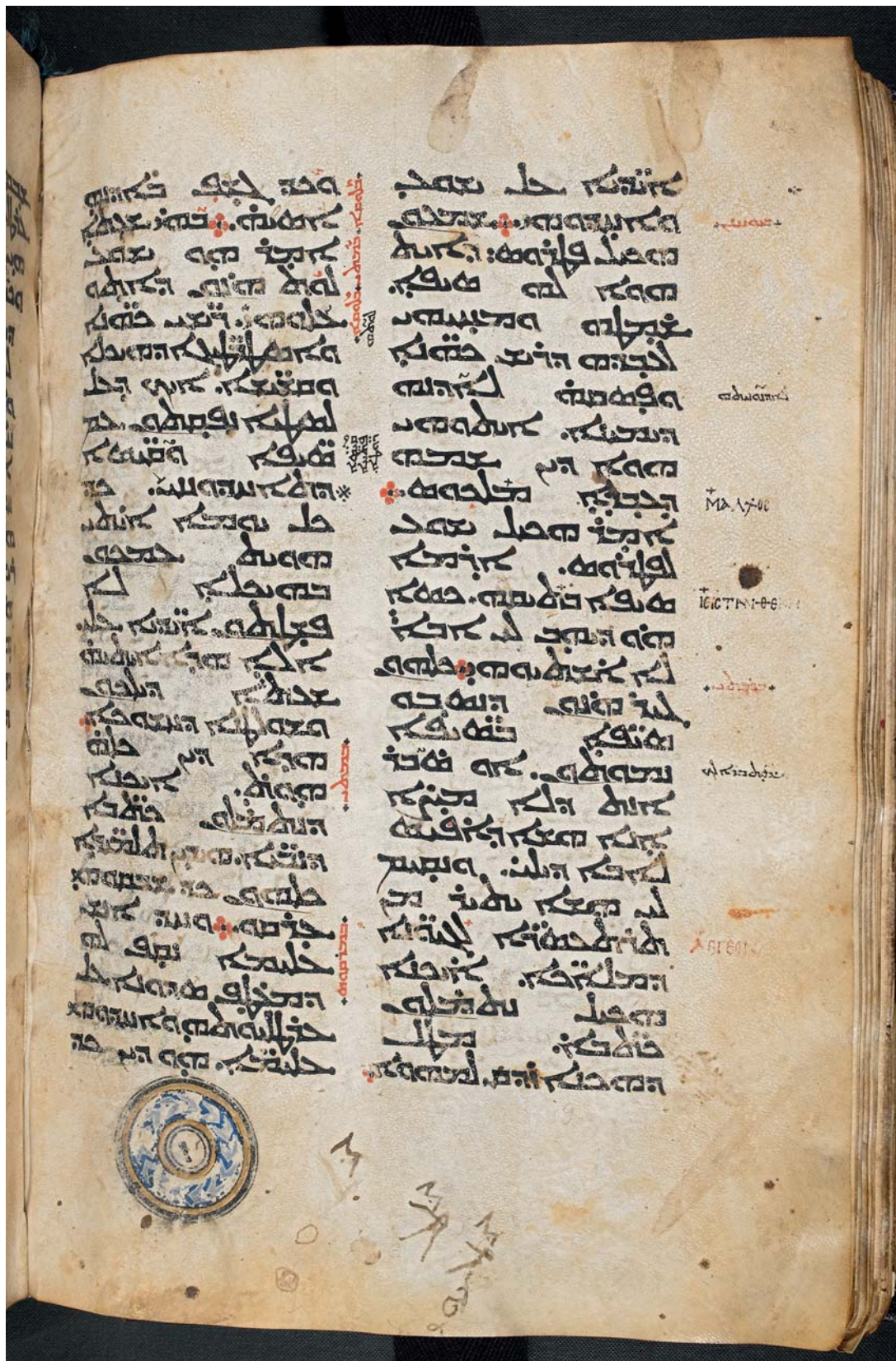
²⁹ Barsaum 1964, 93. The wording does not, however, entirely preclude the possibility that there were other manuscripts copied by Emmanuel that did not require rebinding.

³⁰ Dolabany 1994, 6; Barsaum 2008, 52-53 (considerably more fully; thus Dolabany does not mention Petros). Dolabany's main points are summarized in René Lavenant's French translation of the Catalogue of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, in *ParOr* 19 (1994), 606 (though the A.D. date is wrongly given there as 1042, and not 1041). This is evidently the same manuscript as that cited by Barsaum 2003, 153 (where the date is given as 1046; this was then corrupted to 1064 in Fiey 1963, 322 n. 145).

³¹ The colophon thus supports Michael the Syrian's date for his consecration against the later date given by Barhebraeus.



Pl. 13. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 71a (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 14. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 70b (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 15. Colophon; London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 135b (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)

The colophon continues with a eulogy of Theodoros' profession (a merchant) and notable family background; also how he had "built and adorned churches", as well as commissioning (*sam*) the present manuscript. An additional note in the same hand, but outside the framed colophon on fol. 202a, states the lections had been collected and set in order by the priest 'Abdaloho, son of 'Adi of 'Azizuno, of the Karmo family (Karmawoyo)³².

On fol. 202b there are traces of an illuminated cross-page (Pl. 19). It features not a *crux gemmata* of the type found in Or. 3372, but a simple cross on a single step, set against the plain parchment ground, with text from Psalm 44:5 placed vertically in the four sectors around the cross. The composition has a wide frame with a roundel in each of the four corners. The cross and frame are formed from a three-braid interlace, with the braids having slight gradations in colour: 1. orange/yellow/white; 2. purple/pink/white; 3. green/white. Similar braiding, with a similar range of colours, occurs in Sachau 304.

Initially puzzling is that the text is in mirror reverse. The explanation, however, is that the image is not the original painting, but an offset from the cross-page that would have been painted on the facing page, though it appears that this is no longer extant. This type of offset most frequently occurs when a painting is subject to damp or water damage. Damage of this sort affected Damascus MS 12/21, as one can see from the double-spread with the colophons (fols 201b-202a; Pls 16-17). There is a large patch of stain in the centre; part of the text is smudged and faint, and a section of the border on fol. 202a has offset onto fol. 201b. A sense of the appearance of the original cross-page can be gleaned by flipping the image horizontally (Pl. 18).

A cross on one or more steps became a common feature of cross-pages in Syriac manuscripts. In contrast to the earliest surviving Syriac cross-pages where the cross was set in a roundel, in manuscripts from the late twelfth and thirteenth centuries the composition was invariably set in a large rectangular frame³³. Many of these frames are braided, but the crosses in most cases are of the mosaic type referred to earlier rather than braided as in the Damascus manuscript³⁴. Parallels to the cross-page in the Damascus manuscript can be found in three manuscripts from Tur 'Abdin. Two of these, BnF MSS Syr. 30 and Syr. 41, are associated with Qartmin, and were written in the last decades of the

twelfth century by the same scribe, Rabban Simeon, who also painted their cross-pages³⁵. The third manuscript, Berlin Sachau 322, is dated A.G. 1552/A.D. 1240/41 and was produced in Salah in Tur 'Abdin. Its cross-page has the same arrangement of text as the cross-page in the Damascus manuscript³⁶, and its frame is similarly wide (Pl. 56).

To judge from what Leroy admitted was a limited selection of Syriac cross-pages, the example in the Damascus manuscript is the earliest of the type, and the earliest to use Psalm 44:5 – a hundred and fifty years earlier than Syr. 30 and Syr. 41, and almost exactly two hundred years than Sachau 322³⁷. It is perhaps rash to suggest that Petros originated the type, but his work might have been an important source for the tradition in Tur 'Abdin, especially, since Sachau 322 has enough affinities with the work of Emmanuel to suggest strong local continuity (see Appendix 2).

Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, MS Sachau 304

This is an illuminated Gospel lectionary which contains a note of A.G. 1697/A.D. 1385/86, by Najmo bar 'As'ar of Gaslona stating that "There wrote this holy Gospel book Emmanuel, monk and deacon, nephew of John, bishop of the holy Monastery of Qartmin and Tur 'Abdin [sic]".

The contents, however, contain a number of specifically East Syriac commemorations which pose a problem for this attribution³⁸: either one must suppose that Emmanuel happened to be copying from an East Syriac lectionary and was so concentrating on his calligraphy that he did not notice

³² For the Syrian Orthodox in Tagrit, see Fiey 1963, 289-342; Harrak 2001, 11-40.

³³ Leroy 1964, 113-114. BL Add. 14591, sixth century, has a rectangular frame but the main body of the cross is set inside a circle (Leroy 1964, 114, Pl. 3.1).

³⁴ There are few known braided crosses; but see that in an undated manuscript, BnF Syr. 70 (Leroy 1964, Pl. 4.2).

³⁵ Leroy 1964, 120-121, 254-256, Pls 4.1, 7.2. The braided frame of BnF Syr. 41 has roundels in its four corners.

³⁶ Leroy 1964, 121, Pl. 6, Fig. 1. See Leroy 1964, 120 for manuscripts such as Sachau 322 where there is more than one cross-page. The same arrangement of text is found on the cross-page in BnF Syr. 40, which was produced near Edessa in 1190 (Leroy 1964, 120, Pl. 4.3).

³⁷ Leroy 1964, 119-121.

³⁸ The manuscript was one of those used by Jean-Maurice Fiey (1963, 28) for his study 'Le sanctoral syrien...', where he dates it "au minimum du XIIIe".



Pl. 16. Colophon; Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, MS 12/21, fol. 202a
 (photograph: By permission of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate)



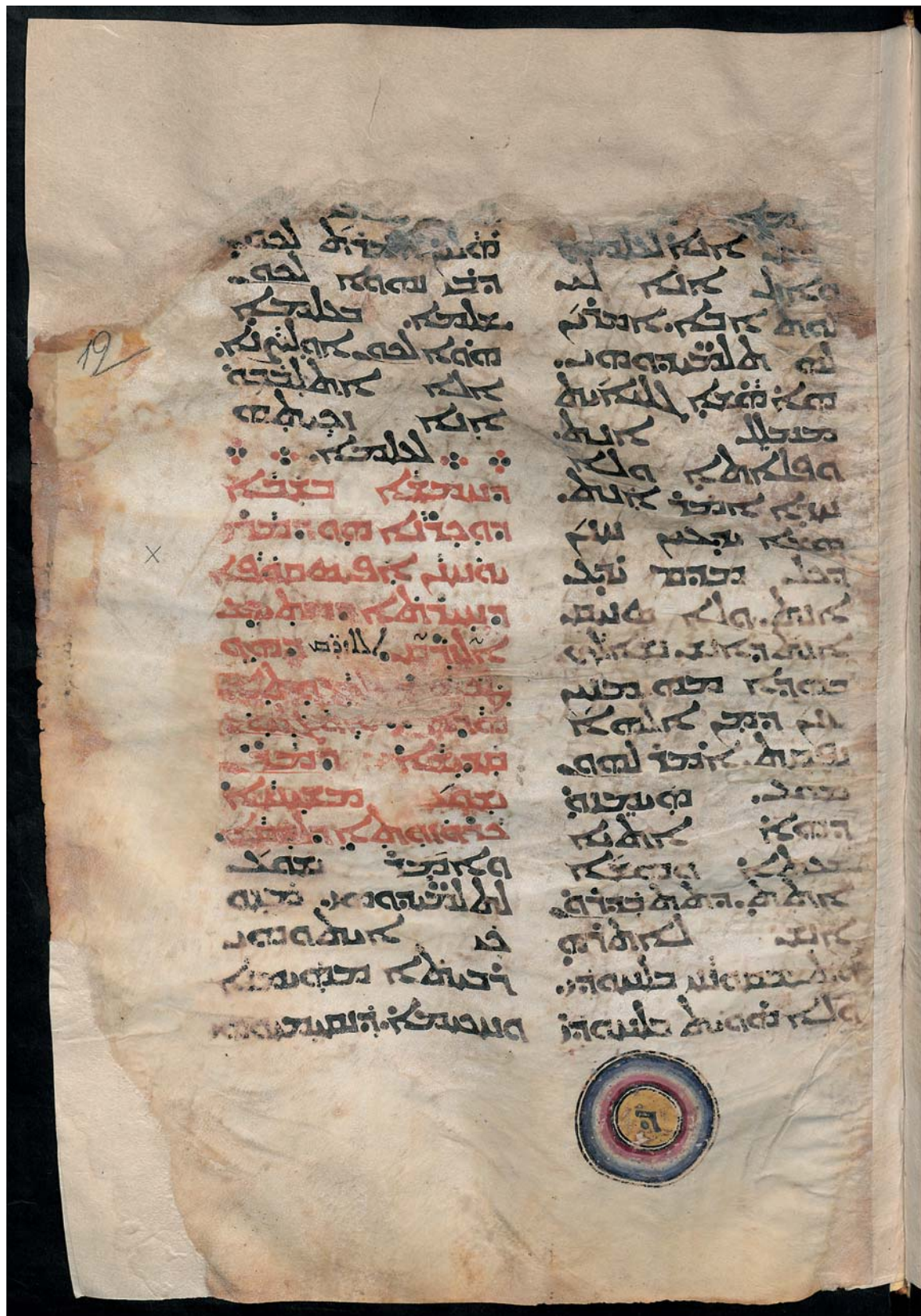
Pl. 17. Colophon; Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, MS 12/21, fol. 201b
(photograph: By permission of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate)



*Pl. 18. Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, MS 12/21, fol. 202b (the image has been reversed to convey how the text on the original painting on fol. 203a would have read)
(photograph: By permission of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate)*



*Pl. 19. Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, MS 12/21, fol. 202b
(photograph: By permission of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate)*



Pl. 20. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 12a, beginning of the fourth quire (photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 21. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 11b, end of the third quire (photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)

that such *bêtes noires* for the Syrian Orthodox as Barsauma of Nisibis were among those commemorated; or, much more likely, he had been commissioned to copy the lectionary by a patron from the Church of the East.

Carl Eduard Sachau suggested a thirteenth-century date for Sachau 304, on the basis of the similarity of the script to that of Sachau 322, which is dated A.G. 1552/A.D. 1240/41 (Pls 24-25; see Appendix 2)³⁹. Sachau's dating has been followed by almost all scholars, and Leroy concluded that the attribution to Emmanuel was mere guess-work on the part of Najmo, and that the manuscript belonged to the first half of the thirteenth century⁴⁰. Palmer, however, has argued that Najmo's attribution was in all probability based on the damaged original colophon, for Najmo noted that parts of the manuscript had been burnt and that he had re-bound what remained. Palmer thus convincingly dated Sachau 304 to the eleventh century⁴¹.

In fact, the script and ductus of Sachau 304 are strikingly similar to the hand of Or. 3372 and Damascus 12/21 (Pls 22-24). All three manuscripts are written in a very dark black ink of similar thickness, intensity, and sheen, and Sachau 304 and Or. 3372 have quire numbers decorated in comparable fashion, inset in decorated medallions, though there are differences we shall return to⁴². The two-column format is the same, though the British

Library manuscript is slightly smaller in all dimensions, even allowing for the fact that the text block was trimmed when it was given a European binding (see Table 1).

The paintings in Sachau 304 and Or. 3372 belong broadly to the same stylistic family – a low-horizon viewpoint with large, stiff figures, with rigid puppet-like gestures, painted against the plain ground of the parchment, and no indication of a landscape ground⁴³. It has already been suggested that the paintings of Or. 3372 owed a debt to Byzantine painting, and this appears to be the case also with Sachau 304. Four images are used to illustrate a narrative of the Dream of Constantine and the Discovery of the True Cross; they occur in two registers on two facing pages (fols 162b-163a: Pls 26-27). However, the images do not read from right to left, as one would expect in a Syriac manuscript, but from left to right. This anomaly is best explained if the ultimate source was a Greek manuscript, and Ewa Balicka-Witakowska has argued that there must have been a more heavily illustrated cycle of miniatures in a Byzantine model that influenced Sachau 304, on the one hand, and, on the other, early European illustrations of the Legend of the True Cross, such as the Wessobrunn Prayerbook from the early ninth century⁴⁴.

In Sachau 304 several of the paintings are not in frames, but interspersed with text. In a single instance (fol. 162b: Pl. 27), two horizontal paintings are stacked one above the other, with a narrow frame running around and between the images, an arrangement similar to that used in the British Library manuscript (Pls 3-4)⁴⁵.

There are, however, significant differences that clearly point to two different hands. The paintings in Or. 3372 are finer in multiple respects. The figures are taller and more slender, and yet occupy less of the height of the picture frame than those in Sachau 304. The pigments in Or. 3372 are more vibrant, and the inclusion of orange lightens the palette considerably, and there is a greater use of gold, which is also more lustrous than in Sachau 304⁴⁶. There is greater detailing, for example in the folds of cloth, and in the framing bands of the stacked images.

The differences can be seen by comparing several figures. Both Joseph from Or. 3372 and St Peter from Sachau 304 sit on a low stool with a rectangular frame (Pls 29-30). St Peter's stool has two steps, but the painter has fumbled the perspective, and

³⁹ Sachau 1899, no. 14, 27-32; however, he added the proviso, "sie kann aber auch älter sein".

⁴⁰ Leroy 1964, 367-371. A late twelfth or thirteenth century date was accepted, for example, by Baumstark 1913; Monneret de Villard 1940, 91 (mid thirteenth century); Balicka-Witakowska 1999, 1; Catalogue Berlin 2006, 41, no. 3.

⁴¹ Palmer 1989, 71-74; *idem* 1986, 57 n. 73. Sachau (1899, 27) wondered whether the monks who Najmo said tried to burn the volume were incensed by its East Syriac references.

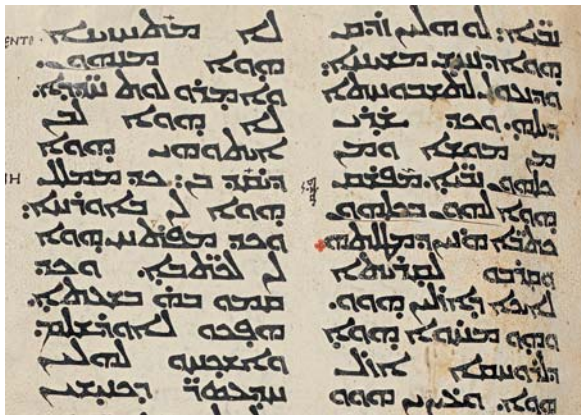
⁴² For the quire markers in Sachau 304, see Leroy 1964, Pl. 13.

⁴³ The images in Sachau 304 were extensively used by Millet for his iconographic studies (1916). Leroy was only able to study them from a black-and-white microfilm.

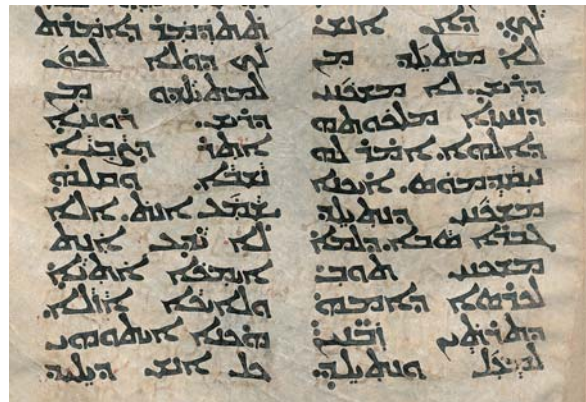
⁴⁴ Balicka-Witakowska 1999. See also Baumstark 1913.

⁴⁵ Leroy 1964, Pl. 126.4.

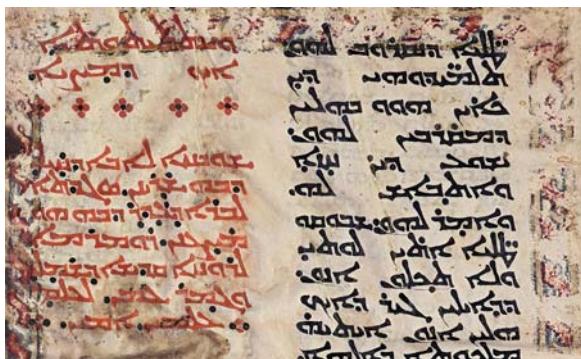
⁴⁶ Gold is also used for some of the headings in Or. 3372. These 'rubric' headings are usually in three lines: in several instances (fols 38a, 39a, 40b) they are all written in red ink, but the middle line is outlined in gold; in other instances, such as fol. 80a, they are all gold; in others red only (for example, fols 95a, 96a, 97b).



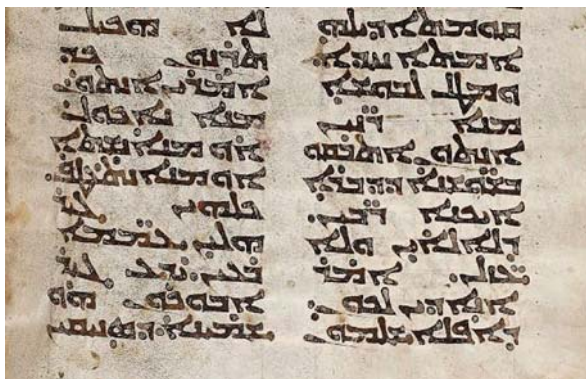
Pl. 22. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 85a
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 24. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 26a
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 23. Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, MS 12/21, fol. 201b (photograph: By permission of the Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate)



Pl. 25. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 322, fol. 73b
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)

St Peter perches precariously. There are marked differences in the rendering of the hair, face, and hands between the two manuscripts. Peter's hair sits atop his head like a stiff wig, or, as Leroy more reverently remarked, like a skullcap ("calotte"). In Or. 3372 Joseph's hair has a central parting, and sits more comfortably on the head. The treatment of St Peter's face in Sachau 304 lacks the fine highlighting characteristic of Or. 3372, where the faces are distinctively modelled, the cheeks enlivened with a circle of rouge, and white highlights used to emphasize the nose and sometimes the eyebrows, which are further underlined in red⁴⁷. In Sachau 304 St Peter's left hand rests on the cushion like a great crustacean claw, whereas in Or. 3372 Joseph's hand, while large, has fingers rendered with some sense of proportion and delicacy. Comparison of Christ extending

an arm in the Harrowing of Hell in Sachau 304 with St John Baptizing Christ from Or. 3372 confirms how inept the painter of Sachau 304 was in rendering hands, though even more egregious is his rendering of Christ's arms (Pls 31-32). They are as short and stubby as the Baptist's are perhaps unduly long. There is an elongated elegance in the depiction of a winged angel in Or. 3372 that contrasts with the stocky appearance of his counterpart in Sachau 304 (Pls 33-34). We are clearly not dealing with the same painter.

These examples also exemplify the differences in the rendering of costume in the two manuscripts.

⁴⁷ Some attempt at this type of modelling of the faces can be found on Sachau 304, fol. 162b, but the white is grey and faint and the red is a dull brick and faint.

Table 1: Comparison of known MSS copied by Emmanuel

	BL MS Or. 3372	Sachau 304	Damascus, Syr.Orth. Pat. MS 12/21
	Lectionary	Lectionary	Lectionary
Material	Parchment	Parchment	Parchment
Number of folios	142	195	205
Size of folio	35.5 × 24	40 × 28	42 × 28
Size of text block	24 × 17	28.5 × 20	28.5 × 20.5
No. of columns	2	2	2
Width of each column	8.6	9.2	9.5 (left), 9.0 (right)
Width of gutter between columns	1.4	1.5	2
Height of line, approx.	0.4	0.6	1
Interlinear spacing	0.4	0.6	0.5
Size of full-page miniature	26 × 17.8 (fol. 3a) Leroy says 4a	26 × 19 (fol. 106.1b)	28.5 × 19.7 (fol. 202b)
Quires	Quinternions	Quinternions	Not known
Kurras-roundels	Begin and end of each quire	Begin and end of each quire	Not known
Script	<i>Estrangelo</i>	<i>Estrangelo</i>	<i>Estrangelo</i>
Number of lines per page	26	22–24 or 25	25–27
Number of columns	2	2	2
Scribe	Signed Emmanuel	Ascribed to Emmanuel	Signed Emmanuel
Figurative painter	Nihe	Attrib. here to Petros and another painter	n/a
Illuminator	Nihe, and Petros [?]	Attrib. here to Petros	Petros
Original binder	Petros	Probably Petros	Petros
Place	Attrib. here to Qartmin	Attrib. here to Qartmin	Qartmin
Date	—	—	A.G. 1353 / A.D. 1041

In Sachau 304 the folds are a swirl of lines and shapes with no clear sense of the gravitational fall of cloth. In Or. 3372, on the other hand, the costumes are more highly modelled, with long, liquescent lines in a paler shade of the colour of the cloth, and sometimes in white, providing a rhythmic fullness to the fall of cloth⁴⁸.

Several elements in Or. 3372 – for example the oval highlights on the lower part of the Virgin’s robe (Pl. 9), the stack of v-shaped ‘catenary’ folds seen in the lower part of St John the Baptist’s yellow robe (Pl. 32) or in the blue robe of the angel flying above him (Pl. 4), and the zig-zag hem of the mantle worn by the angel standing to the right of the baptized Christ (Pl. 34) – are typical of what Wilhelm Koehler aptly termed the ‘damp-fold style’, which originated in Byzantium in the second half of the tenth century⁴⁹. The Syriac painter has appropriated these pictorial devices without, however, using them to convey the body underneath the robes, which was a fundamental contribution of this style.

⁴⁸ The swaddling clothes held by the angels are gold, with the folds indicated by very fine black lines.

⁴⁹ Koehler 1941, esp. 70; Nelson 1983. The ‘damp-fold style’ helped transform Romanesque painting in Europe in the twelfth century.

These comparisons can be multiplied, but they should suffice to indicate that the painter of Sachau 304 was a less gifted artist than the painter of Or. 3372. The family history allows us to propose attributions.

4. A FAMILY AT WORK

Or. 3372 was almost certainly one of the seventy manuscripts that the scribe Emmanuel dedicated to the Abbey of Qartmin. Its four figural scenes were executed by a single painter, whereas the illumination may have been made by several artists. One of these was responsible for the framed cross at the beginning of the manuscript (Pl. 2), and an indication that this was the artist who painted the figural scenes can be found in the two panels of interlace at the top of the cross-page, and in the interlace frame which divides the figurative scenes on fol. 4b (Pls 3-4, 35-37). In both instances the interlace is two-strand and monochrome, and the line is slightly unsteady, especially when compared with some of the three-braid interlace elsewhere in Or. 3372 (Pl. 38). As Nihe is credited in the colophon of Or. 3372 with helping his brothers with the “illustration” (*ṣurteh*) and is noted by Barhebraeus for his “perfect grace” as a painter, we can attribute the figural painting with confidence to Nihe, and by extension also the cross-page.

Much of the remainder of the illumination – the mostly braided panels that divide the lections in Or. 3372 (Pls 39, 41) and the *kurras* markers at the beginning and end of each quire (Pls 45-46) – can be attributed to Nihe’s brothers Emmanuel and Petros, for the colophon states that Nihe’s brothers “laboured with him in the illumination of this book, and in its binding”. Petros may possibly have been the principal illuminator, first because quire markers are most pertinent to a binder and, second, because he is credited with “the ornamentation (*b-pa’yuteh*)” and binding of the Damascus MS 12/21. That presumably included the cross-page (Pl. 19), which, as we have seen, has affinities with some of the three-strand interlace work in Or. 3372.

There is no written record of who illuminated Sachau 304, but some of its best illumination is closely related to work in Or. 3372, even if the materials seem poorer and there is little use of gold (Pls 39-42). Correspondences between some quire markers in Or. 3372 and in Sachau 304 suggest that Petros may have played a lead hand in the

illumination of both manuscripts (Pl. 45, 47), even though Najmo bar ‘As‘ar of Gaslona’s note in Sachau 304 makes no mention of an illuminator.

On the other hand, there are enough differences between some of the quire markers to suggest the involvement of an artist who had played no part in Or. 3372, just as there was clearly a different figurative painter. The majority of the quire markers on facing pages in both manuscripts – one on the last page of a quire, the other on the first page of the succeeding quire – form corresponding pairs that are, in most cases, symmetrical in form, decoration, and size (Pls 45-46)⁵⁰. Those in Or. 3372 are all roundels, whereas in Sachau 304 sixty per cent are roundels, and the remainder are rectangles or polygonal stars or composite geometrical forms (Pls 48-50), and, unlike those in Or. 3372, they do not always form matching pairs (Pls 49-50). The increased variety of forms in Sachau 304 represents a different sensibility that presages the miscellany of forms found in a thirteenth-century manuscript from the Tur ‘Abdin, Sachau 322 (Pl. 55; see below, Appendix 2).

There are also differences in the position of the quire markers in the two eleventh-century manuscripts: in Or. 3372 the marker is always centred on the column closest to the gutter, whereas in Sachau 304 it is often shifted towards the column closest to the fore-edge; with the result that it is not centred on either of the columns, nor is it centred on the intercolumnar space (Pls 13-14, 20-21). The different approach to positioning the marker and the use of a greater variety of shapes for the *kurras* might indicate that Petros had become more adventurous and less fastidious over time, or, more likely, that there was another person, perhaps of a younger generation, who took over some of the work⁵¹.

Who painted the figural scenes in Sachau 304 is unclear. One of the few discernible parts of the image on fol. 2a is the hand of the Virgin, and this is so much more finely painted than the hands in some of the other scenes in this manuscript that we

⁵⁰ The symmetry is disrupted, of course, by the different number of the quire, which occupies the centre of the marker. In at least one instance in both Or. 3372 and Sachau 304 one of the roundels is much larger than its facing match (see Pls 20-21).

⁵¹ Unfortunately, it has not been possible to study the Damascus manuscript in person and there is no record of its *kurras* markers.



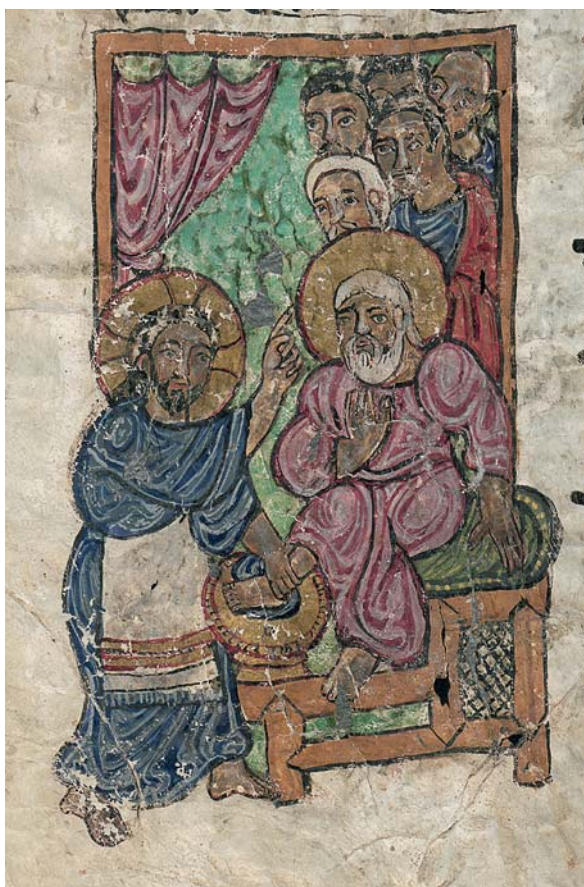
Pl. 26. *Dream of Constantine and Excavation of the crosses*; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 163a
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 27. *Interrogation of the Jews and Proofing of the crosses*; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 162b
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 28. Last Supper and Anointing of Jesus; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 90b
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 29. *Christ washing the feet of Peter*;
Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 89a
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)

can confidently attribute it to a different artist⁵². In all likelihood this was a senior figure, and could have been Petros or Emmanuel himself. Petros, we have suggested, might have painted some of the interlace work in Or. 3372 and Sachau 304 (Pls 39-40); whoever did that work was not the artist responsible for a panel of markedly different three-braid interlace in Sachau 304 (Pl. 44). This panel is coarser: the 'strands' are wider and do not read as continuous braids, but as a series of rectangles, and they lack the subtle gradations in colouring. It is as inept a derivation of work in Or. 3372 (Pl. 43) as the figural painting in Sachau 304 is of Nihe's work. If we are correct in attributing the finer interlace work in Sachau 304 to Petros, Petros cannot have illuminated this coarse panel, and, since this panel forms an integral part of the figural painting on fol. 90b (Pl. 28), it argues against



Pl. 30. *Joseph, detail from the Nativity*; London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 4a (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)

Petros being the figurative painter behind the bulk of paintings in Sachau 304. We can conclude that another, unnamed artist was involved, working in a style that was a clumsy derivative of Nihe's⁵³. We do not know, however, when Nihe ceased to work with his brothers, or when this less able painter joined the team, especially as the only dated manuscript of the three – Damascus MS 12/21 which

⁵² Leroy 1964, Pl. 125, Fig. 1.

⁵³ Alternatively, it is possible that the paintings were by the scribe, Emmanuel, though in the medieval Syriac tradition scribe and figural painter were often different people. Some of the paintings form unusual blocks on the page around a section of text, and there was clearly a close coordination between scribe and the painter, but whether this indicates that scribe and painter were the same person or two artists working closely together is difficult to say. In the very late twelfth century a Rabban Simeon was responsible for the script and the painted cross-page in two manuscripts associated with the region of Qartmin: Paris, BnF MSS Syr. 41 and Syr. 30 (Leroy 1964, 254-257).



Pl. 31. *Harrowing of Hell*; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 106(2)a
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 32. *St John the Baptist baptizing Jesus*; London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 4b
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)

dates from A.D. 1041 – contains no figural illustrations⁵⁴.

John of Qartmin's nephews must have produced many of their manuscripts for Qartmin, as Barhebraeus claims Emmanuel donated seventy to the monastery, but they were not averse to working for other patrons, even if, as in the case of Sachau 304, they were East Syriac.

⁵⁴ Palmer suggests that he should be identified with Athanasius Hoye/Nihe who became Bishop of Arsamosat some time between A.D. 1004 and 1030, and eventually ended up as Patriarch (1057–1062); this, however, is problematic, since Michael the Great states in his *Chronicle* that Athanasius Hoye came from the Monastery of Mor Aaron of Sinjar (Chabot 1899–1910, III, 470).

⁵⁵ Palmer 1986, 53; *idem* 1989, 71.

5. QARTMIN AND MELITENE

Or. 3372, Damascus 12/21, and Sachau 304 belonged to a 'renewal' of *Estrangelo* in the Tur 'Abdin that Barhebraeus credited to Bishop John in the late tenth and early eleventh century. He noted that the script had been defunct for more than a century, but Mor John was inspired to revive it by studying books, and he then taught his nephew Emmanuel, the scribe of our three manuscripts⁵⁵. The appeal of this account lies in the image of aspiration: the examination of ancient exemplars, the toil of scribal perfection, and the transmitting of a tradition. *A priori* there seems nothing problematic about the sequence, but Palmer has urged caution, especially as Barhebraeus may have relied on "a record at the Abbey of Qartmin, a source which



Pl. 33. Angel, detail from the *Myrrhbearers*; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 106(1)b
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 34. Angel, detail from *John Baptizing Jesus*; London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 4b
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)

cannot be absolved of the charge of chauvinism”⁵⁶. Nonetheless, the connection between Emmanuel and Qartmin is also to be found in the statement in *The Book of Life* that seventeen books left to the monastery in “the ‘testament’ (*diatheke*) of Emmanuel the head scribe” had been renovated in 1169⁵⁷.

How exactly one should interpret Barhebraeus’ words that Mor John “renewed the writing of *Estrangelo* in Tur ‘Abdin that had been out of use for a hundred years” is, however, far from clear. Around the turn of the millennium three scripts were in use by Syrian Orthodox scribes: two of these were forms of *Estrangelo* – the older with the letters *he*, *waw*, and *mim* left open, and the more recent where these letters have closed forms; the third was the more cursive script known as *Serto*, though in its earlier form, as the present style only appeared in about the twelfth century. Or. 3372

and Sachau 304 make it clear that it was the older, ‘open’ type of *Estrangelo* that was revived. But two further matters remain unclear: what does “in Tur ‘Abdin” imply and what were John’s exemplars?

Examples of the ‘open’ form of *Estrangelo* are known from manuscripts produced in other regions, not far in date from the time of Bishop John. They strongly suggest that “in Tur ‘Abdin” means that the revival was local to Tur ‘Abdin – not that it was in Tur ‘Abdin that a general revival had taken place. Unfortunately there are no dated manuscripts from Tur ‘Abdin from the tenth century on which to verify this. There are, nonetheless, a number of dated

⁵⁶ Palmer 1986, 56-57.

⁵⁷ The passage from *The Book of Life* is quoted by Barsaüm 1964, 93.



Pl. 35. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 3b (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 36. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 3b (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 37. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 4b (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 38. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 15a (photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)

inscriptions which are potentially of assistance⁵⁸. Open forms occur in inscriptions from Qartmin itself for 887/96 [B11] and 1031-c. 1035 [B12], while from elsewhere in Tur 'Abdin there are tenth-century examples from 911 or 914 [A10], 932 [A12], and 934/35 [A13]. It is only from Mardin itself that a dated inscription from the tenth century that is *not* in *Estrangelo* is to be found [A13, dated 961]. Although this evidence is meagre, there is

nothing to contradict the possibility that *Estrangelo* might have fallen out of use in Tur 'Abdin for a maximum of six decades during the tenth century. What is clear is that the open *Estrangelo* subsequently continued to be used regularly in inscriptions from the eleventh and twelfth centuries.

From the eleventh and well into the thirteenth century, both the open and closed forms of *Estrangelo* are found, primarily in lectionaries. Although the closed forms feature more commonly, some of the scripts using the open forms are remarkably similar to Emmanuel's. For example, Sachau 322

⁵⁸ Palmer 1987.



Pl. 39. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 141b
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 41. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 85a
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 40. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 106(1)
a (photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 42. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 195a
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 43. London, British Library, Or. 3372, fol. 37a
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 44. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 90b,
rotated ninety degrees counterclockwise
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 45. Quire marker; London, British Library,
Or. 3372, fol. 121a, beginning of quire 13
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



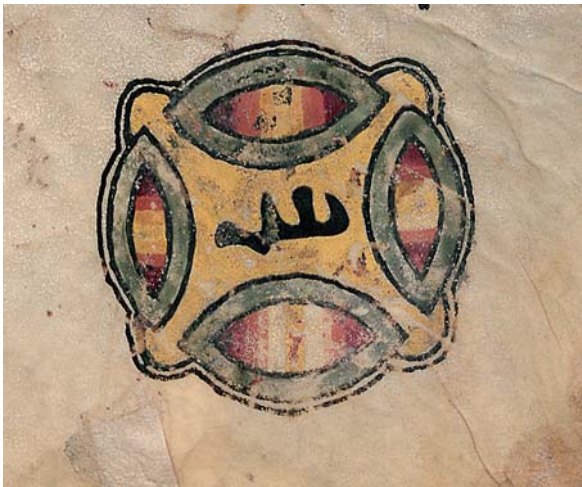
Pl. 46. Quire marker; London, British Library,
Or. 3372, fol. 120b, end of quire 12
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)



Pl. 47. Quire marker; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 191a (photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 48. Quire marker; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 170b (photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 49. Quire marker; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 151a (photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 50. Quire marker; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 150b (photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)

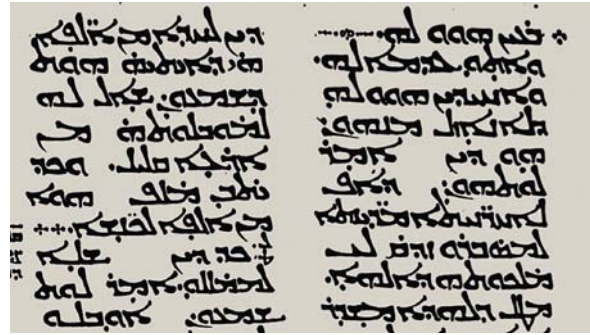
which was produced in the Tur ‘Abdin in 1240/41 shows enough affinities in script to Sachau 304 that Carl Eduard Sachau was prompted, as we have seen, to date Sachau 304 to the thirteenth century (Pls 24-25). The affinities extend to layout and illumination suggesting that the products of Emmanuel and his brothers provided a model for several centuries; indeed, Emmanuel, as head scribe, may have played a role in training a later generation (see Appendix 2)⁵⁹.

⁵⁹ Palmer 1989, 73, 79, Table B for a comparison of hands. For a colour reproduction of Sachau 322, see Catalogue Berlin 2006, 39-40, no. 2; Catalogue New York 2016, 271, no. 172. The entire manuscript is available on-line: http://digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/dms/werkansicht/?PPN=PPN66400010X&DMDID=DMDLOG_0000. At 45 × 32 cm, Sachau 322 is a little larger than the three manuscripts linked to Emmanuel: see above, p. 58, Table 1.

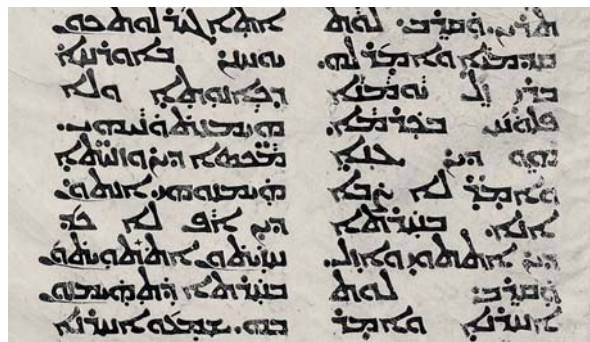
If the revival in the late tenth and early eleventh century was limited to Tur 'Abdin, as seems the most likely, then it would be important to identify what sort of exemplars from elsewhere were used by Bishop John. Palmer has suggested Melitene as a source: Melitene had seen an influx of West Syrians in the second half of the tenth century, and several new monastic foundations following its re-conquest by the Byzantines⁶⁰, and it was to Melitene that Bishop John sent Nihe's brother Petros to purchase parchment.

As confirmation of Melitene's influence, Palmer pointed to a phenomenon in BL Add. 12139, which is dated A.G. 1311/A.D. 999-1000: on fol. 84a there is a sudden shift in the third line from the bottom from closed to open *Estrangelo* script (Pl. 53)⁶¹. However, there are at least two issues with this suggestion: first, the less even character of the open script, especially compared with the neat closed *Estrangelo* of the earlier part, suggests that the scribe was adopting a script to which he was less accustomed; secondly, Add. 12139 is of uncertain provenance. More relevant for the present purpose is another lectionary, dated 994, which was written in the Monastery of the Forty Martyrs, near Melitene, where the open *Estrangelo* script is the work of a much more practiced hand⁶². Juxtaposing this manuscript and Sachau 304 (Pls 51-52)⁶³, one can see that the two scripts are remarkably similar, with Emmanuel's differing only in some small details⁶⁴.

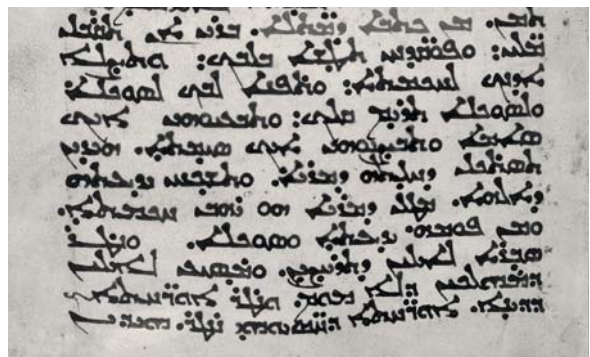
While the present evidence does not allow for certainty, it seems very possible that the open form of *Estrangelo* ceased to be used for monumental



Pl. 51. Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, MS 12/9
(photograph: After Hatch 1946)



Pl. 52. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 304, fol. 85a
(photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 53. London, British Library, Add. 12139, fol. 84a
(photograph: Copyright © The British Library Board)

⁶⁰ Palmer 1986, 37, 53-54, 57; *idem* 1989, 71, cf. 64-65. On the Syriac immigration into the region of Melitene, and the cultural efflorescence of the regions, see Dagron 1976, esp. 195-196. See also Dagron 1976, 197 for a list of Syriac manuscripts produced in Melitene.

⁶¹ Palmer 1986, 53-58; *idem* 1989, 74. This change of script had already been noted by Jan Pieter Nicolaas Land (1862, I, 81) and by John Gwynn (1893, 362-364.) See Wright 1870-72, I, 154-159, and III, Pl. X for a reproduction of fol. 12b.

⁶² Olim Jerusalem, St Mark's 25, now Damascus, Syrian Orthodox Patriarchate, MS 12/9: Hatch 1946, Pl. LXXVI. On the site of this monastery, see Dagron 1976, 192.

⁶³ Palmer 1989, 72.

⁶⁴ The most marked difference is perhaps in his *sadhe* and final *nun*; strikingly similar are the pointed *samekh* and the back-curving lower arm of *waw*.

inscriptions in Tur 'Abdin in the second half of the tenth century, and that Bishop John looked to earlier exemplars and to Melitene for inspiration for his book hand.

At the turn of the thirteenth century a Syriac lectionary (Paris, BnF Syr. 355) was sent from an unnamed monastery to Melitene for illustration,

with a list of the scenes to be added⁶⁵. This raises the question of whether two centuries earlier Melitene might have been a source of pictorial as well as scribal inspiration for Nihe and his brothers. The surviving evidence for Syriac painters in Melitene in the late tenth and eleventh centuries is, however, slight⁶⁶. On the other hand, Syriac influence has been detected in a sizable group of eleventh-century illustrated Armenian manuscripts dubbed the ‘Melitene Group’⁶⁷. This connection certainly merits further investigation, particularly since the one known Syriac manuscript with strong affinities to

the ‘Melitene Group’ may be much earlier than is usually thought⁶⁸. However, Melitene painting is unlikely to have played a formative role for Bishop John and his nephews, as the ‘Melitene Group’ is painted in what has been described as a ‘homely’ style, and certainly none of the known paintings from eleventh-century Melitene are as elaborate in composition, graceful in line, rich in materials and vibrant in colouring as Or. 3372⁶⁹. From this we can conclude that Bishop John and his nephews may have looked to Melitene for scribal models, but for pictorial inspiration they did not look

⁶⁵ Omont 1911; Leroy 1964, 268-280; Hunt 1991, 345; *eadem* 2001, 198; Snelders 2010, 175-176. The work was entrusted to Joseph, deacon of Melitene, under the supervision of the bishop of Melitene.

⁶⁶ BL Add. 12139, dated A.D. 999-1000, includes a small image of the Annunciation, but the style bears little resemblance to that of Or. 3372 or Sachau 304 (Fol. 57b: Leroy 1964, Pl. 150, Fig. 3). The scribe of Add. 12139 – Romanos – may have been the scribe of Harvard Syr. 31 (Palmer 1986, 55-56, n. 64), and this too has a marginal drawing, but it is not in either the style of Or. 3372 or of the Melitene style of Armenian manuscripts discussed in the following footnote.

⁶⁷ On the ‘Melitene Group’, see der Nersessian 1963, 1-6; Nordenfalk 1968; Schapiro 1973, 498-499; Izmailova 1979, 21-102; Bezalel Narkiss in Narkiss/Stone 1979, 36-40, and 168 n. 39 for a listing, to which should be added the Vehāpar Gospels, on which see below; Sanjian 1991, 53-56; Thomas F. Matthews in Catalogue New York 1994, 63-65; Dickran Kouymjian: <http://armenianstudies.csufresno.edu/faculty/kouymjian/articles/evolution.htm>. Some of the ‘Melitene Group’ are now attributed to other centres, but this still leaves several with a documented origin in Melitene or nearby. All the manuscripts – associated with priestly rather than royal patronage and, according to Narkiss (Narkiss/Stone 1979, 36), possibly derived from a single prototype – are linked by an extensive Christological cycle shaped more by liturgy than strict Gospel narrative. The scenes tend to be clustered near the beginning of the manuscript, as full-page paintings. The paintings are more linear than painterly, with little or no modelling, thin uneven washes of colour, and no use of gold, ultramarine or lead white. The figures are relatively large in scale; settings are minimal or non-existent; and the painting is mostly against the plain parchment. The scenes are usually set in low rectangular frames with wide, coloured borders, and there are examples of scenes stacked in two registers. Syriac influences on the group as a whole include (1) that the Armenian full-page miniatures are turned counter clockwise, so that instead of running across the page, the baseline of the painting runs parallel to the gutter of the book, which is a feature found in several extant Syriac manuscripts (see, for example, Vatican, MS Barberini Orient. 118, dated A.D. 1092: Leroy 1964, 236-237, Pl. 55.1; BL Add. 7169: Leroy 1964, 350, Pl. 181.1); and (2) that

the action in some of the scenes runs from right to left, as it does in much Syriac painting. The directionality of some of the Armenian ‘Melitene’ paintings thus follows that of a Syriac, rather than Armenian, text; indeed, in a related manuscript, the ‘Vehāpar Gospels’ (Erevan, Matenadaran 10780), an inscription in Armenian reads in reverse (Sanjian 1991, 54, Fig. 99a. On the ‘Vehāpar Gospels’ or ‘Gospels of the Catholicos’, see Matthews in Catalogue New York 1994, 63-65).

Narkiss has suggested that there is an Early Christian link that connects the ‘Melitene Group’, Syriac painting and Cappadocian murals (Narkiss/Stone 1979, 40). While this might explain iconographic parallels, it cannot explain the codicological connections.

⁶⁸ All the defining features of the ‘Melitene Group’ – a liturgically-based Christological cycle, the placement of images both within the manuscript and on the page, iconographic details, and the format, framing, and broad style of the paintings – can be found in one extant Syriac manuscript, BL Add. 7169 (Leroy 1964, 350-366). Leroy and others, notably Millet (1916), argued that the iconography of many of the scenes in Add. 7169 derive from Early Christian archetypes, and André Grabar (1979) reached a comparable conclusion about some of the stylistic features; cf. Balicka-Witakowska 1999. Leroy (1964, 124) also noted “paléochrétienne” connections in the depiction of the cross in Add. 7169. However, Leroy was adamant that it should not be dated early, and opted for a date in the twelfth or thirteenth century. While Leroy’s dating has been generally accepted, it might repay closer study, especially as Leroy’s sole argument is a highly debatable assertion that the trees in one miniature “appartiennent à la plus pure tradition ‘iranienne de l’époque abbaside’ étudiée par Stchoukine” (Leroy 1964, 365). Leroy, however, made no comparison to the Armenian manuscripts. The iconography of the Pentecost scene in Add. 7169 can be compared to that in Jerusalem, Patriarchal Library, MS 1924, fol. 6b, from the Monastery of Shukr Khandara in the Taurus Mountains south of Melitene, dated A.D. 1064 (Narkiss/Stone 1979, 36).

⁶⁹ They display no evidence of damp-fold drapery, though this begins to appear in Armenian paintings such as those in the Gospels of King Gagik, which is datable to the second quarter of the eleventh century. For Byzantine influence on the Gagik Gospels, see der Nersessian 1945, 118.

primarily to scriptoria active in Melitene, but to Byzantine models, some of them luxury products of relatively recent date⁷⁰.

CONCLUSION

Identifying the scribe of the Gospel lectionary BL Or. 3372 with the nephew of John bishop of Tur 'Abdin, who was consecrated bishop in 987/88, means that the manuscript must date from the turn or the first part of the eleventh century, and not, as has usually been assumed, to the thirteenth. The figural paintings were painted by Nihe, while the binding, which is now lost, was executed by Petros, the third member of this brotherly team mentioned by Barhebraeus. Emmanuel and Petros went on to create Damascus MS 12/21 in 1041. The colophon credits Petros with the binding and the illumination, and Petros surely painted the cross-page in the Damascus manuscript (Pls 18-19). This cross-page differs markedly in iconography, style, and finesse from the cross-page in Or. 3372 (Pl. 2), which one can confidently ascribe to Nihe. Petros may also have been responsible for much of the non-figurative illumination of Or. 3372, excluding the cross-page. Another illustrated Gospel lectionary, Berlin Sachau 304, was produced by Emmanuel, probably with the help of Petros, but without the contribution of their brother, the painter Nihe. It seems highly likely that the two remaining brothers were joined by another artist who undertook the majority of the figural scenes in Sachau 304.

While many of the details of this narrative require further confirmation, we can feel certain about where, when and by whom Or. 3372,

Damascus 12/21, and Sachau 304 were produced. They are prime evidence of the production of manuscripts that Barhebraeus connected to Bishop John of Qartmin in the late tenth and early eleventh century, and of the work of members of the same atelier for other patrons. All three include the revival of a form of *Estrangelo* that was to remain influential in the Qartmin region for several centuries (see Appendix 2). Emmanuel's scribal influence was perhaps supported by Petros' influence as an illuminator, as his cross-page in the Damascus manuscript provides what might be the earliest surviving example of a familiar type of Syriac cross-page⁷¹. On the other hand, the figural paintings of Or. 3372 and Sachau 304 bear little resemblance to the paintings in the thirteenth-century manuscripts that have been previously cited as comparanda, and belong instead to a period from which few illustrated Syriac manuscripts survive.

These three manuscripts provide us with new witnesses to the art of Syriac manuscript calligraphy, illumination, and illustration almost two centuries before the time of the Syriac 'renaissance' to which most other extant illustrated Gospel lectionaries belong. They remained relevant, however, in the thirteenth century, as is attested by manuscripts such as Sachau 322, dated 1240/41 (see Appendix 2), and by the praise they received from Barhebraeus. In Barhebraeus' judgement the books Emmanuel donated to Qartmin "have no comparison in the world."

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- ⁷⁰ Melitene influence may explain the use of a coloured ground inside the frames in some of the paintings in Sachau 304 (fols 90b, 123b), a feature found in several Armenian manuscripts, including the probably late tenth-century MS 697 in the Mekhitarist Library in Vienna (Buschhausen/Buschhausen 1981). For another example of coloured grounds, see Erevan, Matenadaran, MS 283, dated A.D. 1033, from the 'Melitene Group'. It is intriguing that in the scene of the Invention of the Cross in Sachau 304, the painter has followed a Western sequence, reading from left to right, whereas the problematic manuscript BL Add. 7169 follows the Syriac direction of reading from right to left. As discussed earlier, Balicka-Witakowska (1999) argues for a Byzantine iconographic model for the paintings in Sachau 304. On Add. 7169, see above, note 68.
- ⁷¹ Leroy 1964, 119-121.
- Abbeloos, J.B., T.J. Lamy (eds and transl.) 1872-1877, *Gregorii Barhebraei, Chronicum ecclesiasticum*, 3 vols, Paris/Louvain.
- Anderson, J.C. 1992, *The New York Cruciform Lectionary*, University Park, PA.
- Assemani, G.S. 1719-1728, *Bibliotheca Orientalis Clementino-Vaticana in qua manuscriptos codices Syriacos, Arabicos, Persicos, Turcicos, Hebraicos, Samaritanos, Armenicos, Aethiopicos, Graecos, Aegyptiacos, Ibericos, et Malabaricos...*, 9 vols, Rome.
- Bagnoli, M., H.A. Klein, C.G. Mann 2011, *Treasures of Heaven: Saints, Relics, and Devotion in Medieval Europe*, New Haven/London.
- Baldwin Smith, E. 1918, *Early Christian Iconography and a School of Ivory Carvers in Provence*, Princeton, NJ (Princeton Monographs in Art and Archaeology VI).
- Balicka-Witakowska, E. 1999, 'The Story of the Invention of the Holy Cross Illustrated in Two Syriac Manuscripts', in: R. Favreau, M.H. Debiés (eds), *Iconographica: Mélanges offerts à Piotr-Skubiszewski*, Poitiers, 1-8.

- Barsaum, I.A. (G.P. Behnam ed.) 1964, *Maktbonutho d-'al Tur 'Abdin*, Jounieh.
- Barsaum, I.A. 2003, *The Scattered Pearls. A History of Syriac Literature and Sciences*, Piscataway, NJ.
- Barsaum, I.A. 2008, *Sritothon d-dayro d-Kurkmo/Dayruzafaran Manuscripts*, Damascus.
- Brubaker, L. 1985, 'Politics, Patronage, and Art in Ninth-Century Byzantium: The "Homilies" of Gregory of Nazianzus in Paris (B. N. Gr. 510)', *DOP* 39, 1-13.
- Buchthal, H. 1938, *The Miniatures of the Paris Psalter: A Study in Middle Byzantine Painting*, London.
- Buchthal, H. 1939, 'The Painting of the Syrian Jacobites in Its Relation to Byzantine and Islamic Art', *Syria* 20, 136-150.
- Buchthal, H., O. Kurz 1942, *A Hand List of Illuminated Oriental Manuscripts*, London (Studies of the Warburg Institute 12).
- Buchthal, H., F. Wormald 1957, *Miniature Painting in the Latin Kingdom of Jerusalem*, Oxford.
- Buschhausen, H., H. Buschhausen 1981, *Armenische Handschriften der Mechitaristen-Congregation in Wien: Katalog zur Sonderausstellung in der Österreichischen Nationalbibliothek*, Vienna.
- Chabot, J.-B. (ed. and transl.) 1899-1910, *Chronique de Michel le Syrien, Patriarche Jacobite d'Antioche (1166-1199). Éditée pour la première fois et traduite en français*, 4 vols, Paris.
- Catalogue Berlin 2006, *Die Dschazira: Kulturlandschaft Zwischen Euphrat Und Tigris* (A. von Gladiss ed.), Berlin (Veröffentlichung des Museums für Islamische Kunst V).
- Catalogue New York 1997, *The Glory of Byzantium: Art and Culture of the Middle Byzantine Era, A.D. 843-1261* (H.C. Evans, W.D. Wixom eds), New York.
- Catalogue New York 2016, *Court and Cosmos. The Great Age of the Seljuqs* (S.R. Canby et al. eds), New York.
- D'Aiuto, F., G. Morello, A.M. Piazzoni 2000, *I Vangeli dei popoli: la parola e l'immagine del Cristo nelle culture e nella storia*, Roma/Città del Vaticano.
- Dagron, G. 1976, 'Minorités ethniques et religieuses dans l'Orient byzantin à la fin du X^e et XI^e siècles: immigration syrienne', *Travaux et Mémoires* 6, 177-216.
- Dalton, O.M. 1909, *Catalogue of the Ivory Carvings of the Christian Era with Examples of Mohammedan Art and Carvings in Bone in the Department of British and Mediaeval Antiquities and Ethnography of the British Museum*, London.
- Der Nersessian, S. 1940-1941, 'Remarks on the Date of the Menologium and the Psalter Written for Basil II', *Byzantion* 15, 104-125.
- Der Nersessian, S. 1945, 'Three Lectures on Armenian Art', in: *Armenia and the Byzantine Empire: A Brief Study of Armenian Art and Civilization*, Cambridge, MA, 55-136.
- Der Nersessian, S. 1963, *Armenian Manuscripts in the Freer Gallery of Art*, Washington, DC (Freer Gallery of Art, Oriental Studies 4).
- Dolabany, F.Y. (G.Y. Ibrahim ed.) 1994, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in Za'faran Monastery/mhawyono da-ktobe srite d-beth arke d-dayro d-Mor Hnanyo - Za'faran*, Aleppo.
- Ecker, H., T. Fitzherbert 2012, 'The Freer Canteen, reconsidered', *Ars Orientalis* 42, 177-193.
- Fiey, J.-M. 1963a, 'Le sanctoral syrien oriental d'après les Évangélistes et Breviaires du XI^e au XIII^e siècle', *OS* 8, 21-54.
- Fiey, J.-M. 1963b, 'Tagrît. Esquisse d'histoire chrétienne', *OS* 8, 289-342.
- Fogg, S. 1989, *Rare Books and Manuscripts. Medieval Manuscripts: Catalogue 12*, London.
- Goldschmidt, A., K. Weitzmann 1930-1934, *Die byzantinischen Elfenbeinskulpturen des X-XIII Jahrhunderts*, 2 vols, Berlin.
- Galavaris, G. 1995, *Zōgraphikē Vyzantinōn cheirophōnōn*, Athens.
- Grabar, A. 1979, 'Les illustrations des Beatus mozarabes et les miniatures orientales chrétiennes et juives', *CArch* 28, 7-16.
- Gwynn, J. 1893, *Two Memoirs on the Syriac versions of the New Testament*, Dublin.
- Harrak, A. 2001, 'Recent archaeological excavations in Takrit and the discovery of Syriac inscriptions', *Journal of the Canadian Society for Syriac Studies* 1, 11-40.
- Hatch, W.H.P. 1946, *An Album of Dated Syriac Manuscripts*, Paris.
- Hawkins, E.J.W., M.C. Mundell, C. Mango 1973, 'The Mosaics of the Monastery of Mār Samuel, Mār Simeon, and Mār Gabriel near Kartmin, with a Note on the Greek Inscription', *DOP* 27, 279-296.
- Hunt, L.-A. 1985, 'Christian-Muslim relations in painting in Egypt of the twelfth to the mid-thirteenth centuries', *CArch* 33, 111-156.
- Hunt, L.-A. 1991, 'The Syriac Buchanan Bible in Cambridge: Book Illumination in Syria, Cilicia and Jerusalem of the later Twelfth Century', *OCP* 57, 331-369.
- Hunt, L.-A. 2001, 'Leaves from an Illustrated Syriac Lectionary of the Seventh/Thirteenth Century', in: D.R. Thomas (ed.), *Syrian Christians under Islam: The First Thousand Years*, Leiden/Boston/Cologne, 185-202.
- Jerphanion, G. de 1939, 'L'influence de la miniature musulmane sur un évangélaire syriaque illustré du XIII^e siècle (Vat. syr. 559)', *Comptes-rendus des séances de l'Académie des Inscriptions et Belles-Lettres* 83/5, 483-509.
- Jerphanion, G. de 1940, *Les miniatures du manuscrit syriaque n. 559 de la Bibliothèque Vaticane*, Città del Vaticano (Codices e Vaticanis selecti quam simillime expressi iussu Pii PP, consilio et opera curatorum Bibliothecae Apostolicae Vaticanae 25).
- Izmailova, T. 1979, *Armjanskaja miniatjura XI veka* [Armenian Miniatures of the Eleventh Century], Moscow.
- Kaufhold, H. 2008, 'Zur Datierung nach christlichen Ära in den syrischen Kirchen', in: G. Kiraz (ed.), *Malphono w-Rabo d-Malphone: Studies in Honor of Sebastian P. Brock*, Piscataway, NJ, 283-337.
- Koehler, W. 1941, 'Byzantine Art in the West', *DOP* 1, 61-87.
- Land, J.P.N. 1862, *Anecdota Syriaca*, Leiden.
- Lavanant, R. et al. 1994, 'Catalogue des manuscrits de la Bibliothèque du Patriarcat Syrien Orthodoxe à Homs (aujourd'hui à Damas)', *ParOr* 19, 555-661.
- Lee, J., G.C. Renouard 1831, *Oriental Manuscripts Purchased in Turkey*, London.

- Leroy, J. 1964, *Les manuscrits syriaques à peintures conservés dans les bibliothèques d'Europe et d'Orient: contribution à l'étude des Églises de langue syriaque*, 2 vols, Paris (Bibliothèque archéologique et historique 77).
- Leroy, J. 1975-1976, 'La soghita du chérubin et du larron', *ParOr* 6-7, 413-419.
- Margoliouth, G. 1899, *Descriptive List of Syriac and Karshuni Manuscripts in the British Museum Acquired since 1873*, London.
- Millet, G. 1916, *Recherches sur l'iconographie de l'évangile aux XIVe, XVe et XVIe siècles, d'après les monuments de Mistra, de la Macédoine et du Mont-Athos*, Paris (Bibliothèque des Écoles Françaises d'Athènes et de Rome, Fasc. 109).
- Monneret de Villard, U. 1940, 'Le Chiese Della Mesopotamia', *OCP* 128, 1-115.
- Morey, C.R. 1926, 'The painted panels from the Sancta Sanctorum', in: W.R. Worringer, H. Reiners, L. Seligmann (eds), *Festschrift zum sechzigsten Geburtstag Paul Clemen*, Bonn/Düsseldorf, 151-167.
- Morey, C.R. 1929, 'Notes on East Christian Miniatures', *ArtB* 40/1, 4-103.
- Narkiss, B., M.E. Stone 1979, *Armenian Art Treasures of Jerusalem*, New Rochelle, NY.
- Nelson, R.S. 1983 'An Icon at Mt. Sinai and Christian Painting in Muslim Egypt during the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries', *ArtB* 65/2, 201-218.
- Nordenfalk, C. 1968, 'An Illustrated Diatessaron', *ArtB* 50, 119-140.
- Omont, H.A. 1911, 'Peintures d'un évangéliste syriaque du XIIe ou du XIIIe siècle', *Monuments et mémoires Piot* 19, 201-210.
- Palmer, A. 1985, 'Hudot umanut kotubuto b-Militini wab-Tur 'Abdin' ('Renewal of the scribal art in Melitene and Tur 'Abdin'), *Qolo Suryoyo* 42, 29-26 [sic].
- Palmer, A. 1986, 'Charting undercurrents in the history of the West-Syrian people: the resettlement of Byzantine Melitene after 934', *OC* 70, 37-68.
- Palmer, A. 1987, 'A Corpus of inscriptions from Tur 'Abdin and environs', *OC* 71, 53-139.
- Palmer, A. 1989, 'The Syriac letter forms of Tur 'Abdin and environs', *OC* 73, 68-89.
- Palmer, A. 1990, *Monk and Mason on the Tigris Frontier: The Early History of Tūr 'Abdīn*, Cambridge (University of Cambridge Oriental Series 39).
- Payne Smith, R. 1844, *Codices syriacos, carshunicos, madaeos, complectens*, Oxford.
- Sachau, E. 1899, *Verzeichnis der syrischen Handschriften der Königlichen Bibliothek zu Berlin*, Berlin (repr. Hildesheim 2006).
- Sanjian, A.K. 1991, *Armenian Gospel Iconography: The Tradition of the Glajor Gospel*, Washington, DC.
- Schapiro, M. 1973, 'The Miniatures of the Florence Diatessaron (Laurentian MS Or. 81): Their Place in Late Medieval Art and Supposed Connection with Early Christian and Insular Art', *ArtB* 55, 494-531.
- Schiller, G. 1971, *Iconography of Christian Art*, Vol. I, London.
- Schneider, L.T. 1973, 'The Freer Canteen', *Ars Orientalis* 9, 137-156.
- Ševčenko, I. 1962, 'The Illuminators of the Menologium of Basil II', *DOP* 16, 245-276.
- Ševčenko, I. 1972, 'On Pantoleon the Painter', *Jahrbuch der österreichischen Byzantinistik* 21, 241-249.
- Smine, R.E. 1993, 'The Miniatures of a Christian Arabic Barlaam and Joasaph, Balamand 147', *ParOr* 18, 171-229.
- Snelders, B. 2010, *Identity and Christian-Muslim Interaction. Medieval Art of the Syrian Orthodox from the Mosul Area*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA (OLA 198).
- Strzygowski, J. 1885, *Iconographie Der Taufe Christi: Ein Beitrag zur Entwicklungsgeschichte der Christlichen Kunst*, München.
- Szymasek, M. 2012-2013, 'The Lost Screens of the Churches of Mar Cyriacus in Arnas and Mar 'Azaziel in Kefr Zeh (Tur 'Abdin, Turkey), *ECA* 9, 107-118.
- Teule, H., C. Fotesco Tauwinkl (eds) 2010, *The Syriac Renaissance*, Leuven/Paris/Walpole, MA (Eastern Christian Studies 9).
- Walter, Chr. 1971, 'Liturgy and the Illustration of Gregory of Nazianzen's Homilies: An Essay in Iconographical Methodology', *Revue des Études Byzantines* 29, 183-212.
- Weitzmann, K. 1936, 'Das Evangelion in Skevophylakion zu Lawra', *Seminarium Kondakovianum. Recueil d'Études: Archéologie. Histoire de l'Art. Études Byzantines* 8, 83-98.
- Weitzmann, K. 1971, 'A 10th century Lectionary: A Lost Masterpiece of the Macedonian Renaissance', *Revue des Études Sud-Est Européennes* 9, 617-652.
- Wright, W. 1870-1872, *Catalogue of Syriac Manuscripts in The British Museum acquired since the year 1838*, 3 vols, London.
- Zakharova, A. 2005, 'The Original Cycle of Miniatures in the Trebizond Lectionary and its Place in the Byzantine Tradition of Lectionary Illustration', *Néa 'Pómy: Rivista di ricerche bizantinistiche* 2, 169-192.
- Zakharova, A. 2011, 'Miniatures of the Imperial Menologia', *Néa 'Pómy: Rivista di ricerche bizantinistiche* 7, 131-153.

APPENDIX 1: THE LECTIONARY SYSTEM IN BL OR. 3372

An anomaly in the lectionary system in BL Or. 3372 merits a brief excursus. Lectionary manuscripts, with the biblical text arranged in the sequence of its use in the liturgical year, are first attested in Syriac manuscripts in the ninth century. Previous to that, the rubrics for lections were given within the straight biblical text, but a guide, arranged in the sequence of the liturgical year, of where to find the right lections was, from about the seventh century, usually provided at the beginning of the manuscript. This index of lections was in the form of small circles or squares within which the quire number and the page number within the quire were given. The circles or squares were often decorated with geometrical interlinking⁷². Although this index was no longer so necessary once the lections were given in their liturgical sequence, nevertheless it was sometimes still provided in lectionary manuscripts, and this is the case in BL Or. 3372, where the quire and page numbers are given at the beginning of the manuscript, within circles (Pl. 1)⁷³. For some reason the last three circles were left blank, though they were filled in by a later hand with the information “the year four hundred and twelve, Christian (era)”, written in Syriac, then Garshuni, then Arabic; presumably the ‘thousand’ has been omitted, but even so 1412 would be early

for a Christian era dating of a Syrian Orthodox manuscript⁷⁴, quite apart from the fact that the script of the rest of the manuscript clearly points to an earlier date.

A possible reason for the last three circles being left blank may be found on fols 136-141: fol. 135b contains Emmanuel’s colophon, following on the final lection (Pentecost), but on fols 136-141 he continues in exactly the same hand⁷⁵ to provide lections for the whole of the Week of Rest (beginning Monday, Sapro), and for Ascension (Sapro and Qurobo)⁷⁶. Turning back to the main text of the lectionary one discovers the reason for this supplement: there only Ramsho for Monday of the Week of Rest is given (followed immediately by New Sunday), and for Ascension, only Ramsho is given (followed immediately by the Seventh Sunday of the Resurrection period). As can happen when the scribe is paying more attention to the calligraphic side of his art than to the accuracy of the text he is copying, Emmanuel must have accidentally missed out most of the Week of Rest, and the second and third lections of Ascension, and subsequently, once he had realized the mistake, he tacitly added them at the end. Since there is no mention of them in the initial index of lections, that index must have been composed once he had finished up to fol. 135; whether or not the three blank circles were intended for the missing lections on fols 135-141, one cannot say for certain.

⁷² Some examples are given in Leroy 1964, Pls 11-12.

⁷³ Since some lections serve for two different liturgical commemorations, the continued presence of the index is not so redundant as it might at first seem.

⁷⁴ See Kaufhold 2008, 287-289.

⁷⁵ And with the same elaborate geometric decoration between lections.

⁷⁶ The folio containing the end of the last lection, for Ascension, Qurobo, is missing.

The date of Damascus MS 12/21 to 1041, and the re-dating of Or. 3372 and Sachau 304 to the late 10th or early 11th century means that they are two centuries or more earlier than Sachau 322, which was copied in A.G. 1552/A.D. 1240/41 by the monk and priest Sahda and the monk Isaac in the Monastery of Thomas in Salah in Tur 'Abdin⁷⁷. Yet the scripts of Sachau 304 and 322 are sufficiently close that Carl Eduard Sachau attributed Sachau 304 to the thirteenth century (Pls 24-25)⁷⁸. The differences, on the one hand, underline Emmanuel's scribal mastery; the resemblances, on the other, raise questions about the way in which such longevity of practice was maintained.

Sachau 322 is a slightly larger format than Or. 3372, Damascus 12/21, and Sachau 304, but there are similarities in proportion, and in the two-column layout, text-block placement, margins, and rubrics (Pls 54-55). The size of the script in the four manuscripts is also comparable (Pls 22-25), and the number of lines in Sachau 322, twenty-two to the page, compares to some pages of Sachau 304, though the majority of pages in the latter manuscript contain 24 or 25 lines. A difference can be seen in the ink used in Sachau 322, which is not the same intense, lustrous and even black.

A closer comparison of Sachau 322 and Or. 3372 reveals similar letter forms, but a different ductus. In Or. 3372 there is a firmer sense of a base line, counterpoised by more acute diagonals, imparting marked movement to the left (Pls 13-14, 22, 25, 54-55). Emmanuel's handling of the pen is more varied, with a contrast of thick and thin strokes. His treatment of the letter *nun* is notable, for in the final connected *nun* the diagonal downward stroke often emerges from a bead and tapers like a stiletto blade, and in the unconnected examples the loaded ink in the initial bead is beautifully contrasted with the thin wisp of the extended tail (Pl. 54. For the connected see the final letter in lines 2-6 from the bottom; for the unconnected see lines 7, 8, and 10 from the bottom).

It is little wonder that Barhebraeus claimed that "Perfect grace was granted to Emmanuel in writing"⁷⁹.

The illumination of Sachau 322 also harks back to the two earlier models in colouring and treatment. There are similarities in the size and style of the *kurras* markers, though the designs include more polygonal stars. The section headings comprise many that are close to those in the two earlier manuscripts, with a heavy use of knotwork, often set on a diagonal grid, and with borders composed of several similarly sized guard-stripes. There are, however, many others that are different in design, with rosettes as the principal motif, and a less robust, more lace-like feel to the illumination created with smaller motifs and fine, usually white, stippling. It is in these illuminated panels that the most obvious difference is to be found from the earlier manuscripts, though white stippling occurs in some of the illumination in Sachau 304 (Pl. 40).

Sachau 322 has two cross-pages. One is a cross on steps (Pl. 56), and is decorated with mosaic-like tesserae, set within a wide braided border, and, as we have seen, it has echoes of the cross-page in Damascus MS 12/21, including, the same flanking text from Psalm 44:5 (Pl. 19). The second, which is on the facing page, has a square cross set in a roundel decorated with rhombs⁸⁰.

If we set aside Emmanuel's mastery, the similarities between his three manuscripts (Or. 3372, Damascus MS 12/21, and Sachau 304) and Sachau 322, produced some two centuries later, might be attributed to a conscious revival of earlier models. However, an alternative explanation is local traditionalism. Indeed, the quality of Sachau 322 argues that Emmanuel's scribal practices were consciously passed down through generations of scribes in the Tur 'Abdin region, perhaps chiefly in the Monastery of Qartmin. If this is the case, then Bishop John's patronage was of seminal importance in the development of the arts of the book in the region.

A further possibility is that his legacy was maintained through family tradition. Emmanuel and his brothers constituted a fraternal scriptorium. This was not, though, an isolated instance of family involvement in book production in the region. A century and a quarter later two brothers, Gabriel and Elisha, repaired the bindings of some 270 volumes in the Qartmin library. Gabriel is recorded in various sources from the late 1160s to the early 1180s⁸¹. A notice dated 1168/9 in the *Book of Life of Beth Shbirina* recorded that Rabban Gabriel who was active

⁷⁷ For a digital reproduction of the manuscript in full, see http://orient-digital.staatsbibliothek-berlin.de/receive/SBBMSBook_islamhs_00010359.

⁷⁸ Palmer 1989, 79, Table B.

⁷⁹ See above, p. 44. See also Palmer 1989, 71.

⁸⁰ See above, notes 33-37. For a colour reproduction of these two cross-pages, see Catalogue New York 2016, 271, no. 172.

⁸¹ Palmer 1986, 59 n. 84; *idem* 1989, 77.

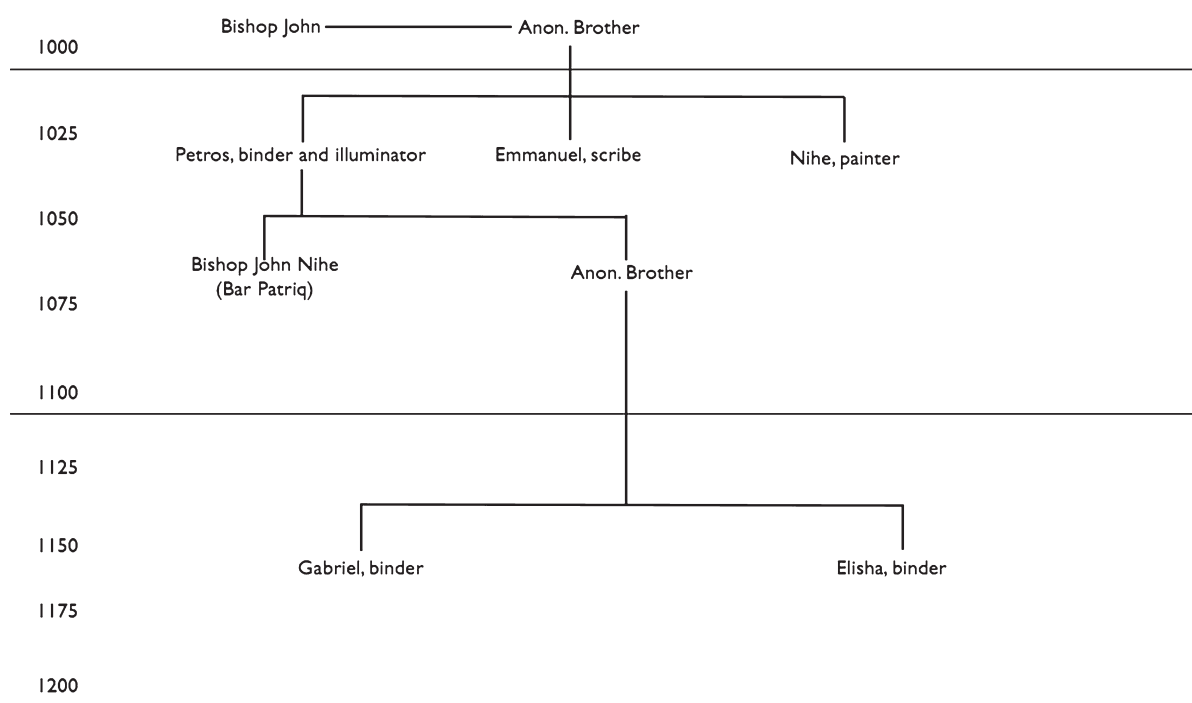
at the time originated from Beth Sbirina and was the son of the brother of Mor John, the bishop of the Abbey [of Qartmin]⁸². In 1176/7 Gabriel commissioned a manuscript from the monk Aaron, in which there is further confirmation that John the Bishop of Tur 'Abdin was his uncle⁸³.

Barsaum's study of the Tur 'Abdin contains three further references to Mor John, who was known as John Nihe. He records that he was one of the bishops of Tur 'Abdin in the eleventh-twelfth centuries, and that he died a martyr. There he calls him the son of Peter of Beth Sbirina, though he also cites a passage in the *Book of Life* that refers to "Mor John Nihe, who is Bar Patriq, bishop of the Abbey." Palmer has proposed these two notices refer to the same person⁸⁴. Finally, Barsaum identified him as

the son of the brother of Rabban Emmanuel of Beth Sbirina, the famous scribe⁸⁵. Since it was customary in the community to name a son after an uncle, and Emmanuel's brothers were called Petros and Nihe, John Nihe may well have been the son of Petros, and named after his uncle the painter Nihe⁸⁶.

There thus seems to have been two bishops of Tur 'Abdin named John who had nephews involved in the art of the book: one lived in the late tenth, early eleventh century, the other in the twelfth century. It is possible that the two bishops were related, and we may tentatively propose a family tree extending over four generations, at least two of which were involved in book production. This family connection would provide additional explanation for the scribal and codicological continuities over two centuries.

Family of Bar Patriq in Beth Sbirina



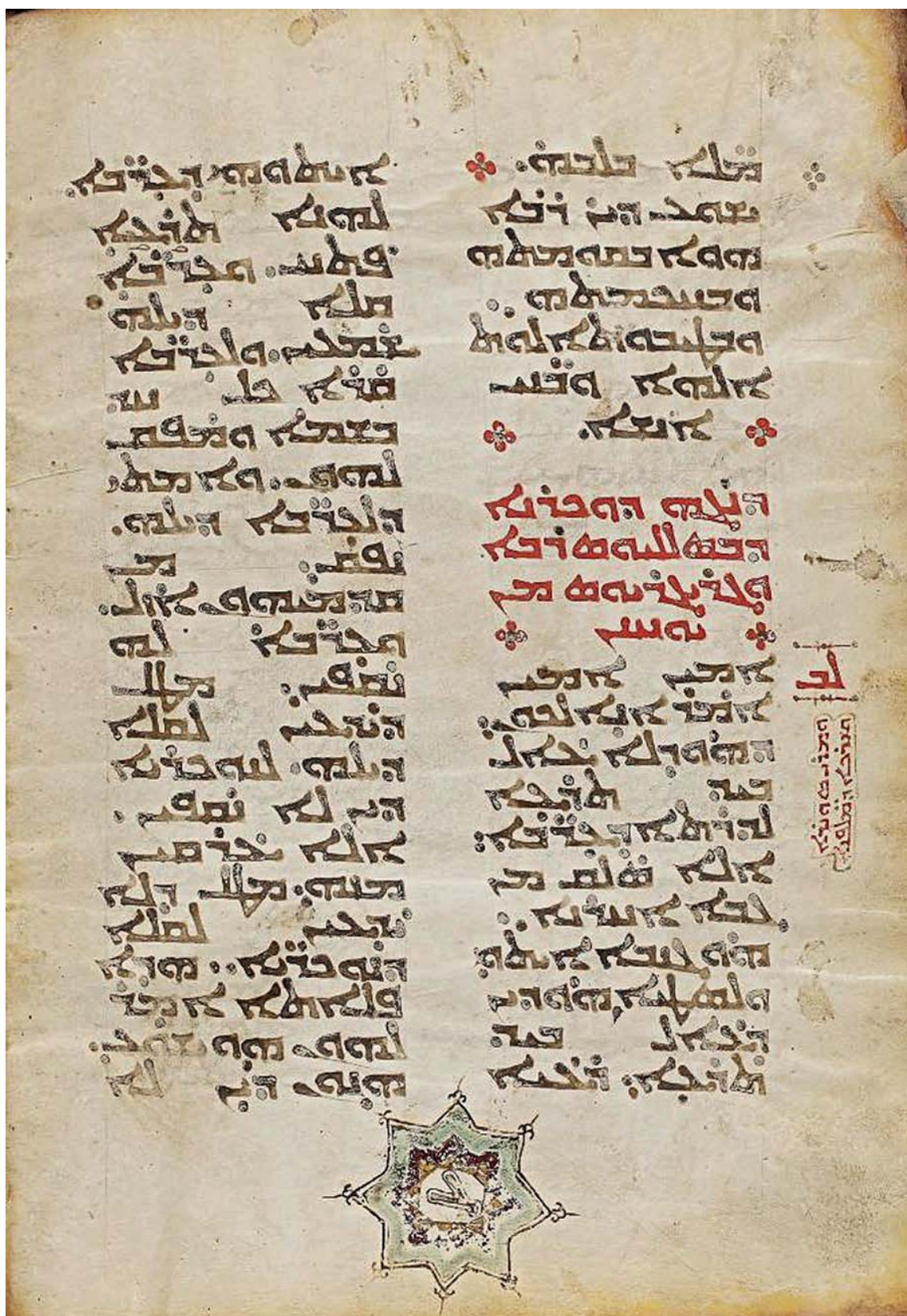
⁸² Palmer 1986, 59 n. 85. In A.G. 1483/A.D. 1181/82 he was responsible for binding a volume (BL Add. 14690), finished by the scribe Simeon of Hah at Qartmin Abbey and "bound by Rabban Gabriel, the nephew of the bishop John", according to William Wright (1872, I, 205-207). On the *Book of Life*, see Palmer 1990, 18-19.

⁸³ Bodleian, MS Marsh 13: Payne Smith 1844, cat. no. 163, col. 543.

⁸⁴ Palmer 1986, 59.

⁸⁵ Palmer 1986, 59 n. 86.

⁸⁶ Cf. Palmer 1986, 58-61. Beth Sbirina is a village near Qartmin (Assemani 1719-1728, I, 216) that was also the home of Solomon the librarian of the Abbey of Qartmin under the first Bishop John when he visited the library in 1020 (Palmer 1986, 57-58).



Pl. 55. Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 322, fol. 37b (photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)



Pl. 56. Cross-page; Berlin, Staatsbibliothek, Sachau 322, fol. 7b (photograph: © SBB-PK, Fotostelle)

*Iconography of the Hierotopos: The Silver Proskynetarion from the Chapel of the Burning Bush at the Monastery of St Catherine, Mount Sinai**

Svetozara RATSEVA

The present study introduces into the scholarly realm a unique work of pilgrimage art, which has not yet been published. This is a gilded silver plate (127 × 87 cm) mounted on the marble stone underneath the Holy Communion Table of the Chapel of the Burning Bush in the Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai (Pl. 1). Its decoration programme includes forty different compositions and single depictions together representing a sublimated vision of pilgrimage to Sinai (Pl. 2). As such, the silver plate is reminiscent of *proskynetaria*, pilgrimage souvenirs with topographic representations of the Holy Land, decorated with images of holy sites, together with biblical themes and images of saints. Usually painted on canvas, these objects were produced in Jerusalem and the vicinity and enjoyed a great popularity throughout the seventeenth to nineteenth centuries¹.

The *proskynetarion* under discussion is composed of fifteen silver plates joined together by miniature hinges. It was designed as a kind of armour that could be put together over the place which the biblical tradition relates to one of the most venerated Old Testament relics: the Burning Bush. In its original state, the fitting would have allowed for an easy assembling and disassembling over the marble stone, but at a certain moment some of the hinges got damaged or lost, while other fragments – very worn by use – got detached from the three narrow leaves at its front part. In their attempt to preserve the *proskynetarion* in the nineteenth century, the monks nailed it to the present-day wooden basis. However, they obviously did not manage to fit some of the panels well enough, which explains the slight shifting of the whole *proskynetarion* upwards and to the right in relation to the sockets of the four columns supporting the board of the altar.

As far as the decoration is concerned, the central part of the upper register of the plate, executed in the chisel engraving technique, presents the image

of the monastery's patron saint, St Catherine, with six scenes from her life and a spread-out Holy map of the Sinai peninsula beneath her. To the right the subject of the veneration of the Holy Mountain and its relics is depicted. It is combined with scenes from the life of the Christ and in the first vertical register the Burning Bush, the prophets Moses and Aaron before the Tabernacle, St John the Baptist, and St John Climacus's Ladder of Divine Ascent. The second (outlying) vertical register to the right presenting the Evangelists St John and St Mark, and the Annunciation, corresponds to the programme from the left part of the *proskynetarion*. There the first vertical register presents the Crucifixion, interpreted through the iconography of the Life-giving Vine, as well as the Ascension, an unidentified saint, and the Transfiguration. The second vertical register presents St Mathew, St Luke, and the Presentation in the Temple. The fore-part of the *proskynetarion* is lined by a narrow frieze, containing in separate stamps the depictions of the six holy liturgists, the Baptism, Christ in Glory, the Resurrection of Lazarus, the Burning Bush, the Entry into Jerusalem, the Anastasis, the Sacrifice of Thanksgiving, the Lamentation of Christ, the Holy Trinity, St Ephrem the Syrian, and the Archangels Michael and Gabriel.

The almost perfectly square panel in the centre of the lower part of the plate depicts the aforementioned Holy map of the Sinai peninsula and on it a strange cult object is placed, made of two joined silver discs, a bigger and a smaller one, each decorated in chisel technique and partially gilded (Pl. 2). The

* For the realization of this study I would like to express my deepest and sincere gratitude to Radoslav Hristov and Monk Gregory of the Monastery of St Catherine.

¹ See the contribution of Rehav Rubin in the present volume of *ECA*, with further references.

bigger disc represents the traditional *Loca Sancta* image of Sinai, including the monastery, the mountain, Prophet Moses, the Burning Bush, and St Catherine. According to the donation inscription, which was recorded by Archimandrite Porphyrius Uspenski in his diaries from his second visit to Sinai in 1850, this object was donated in 1696 by Hadji Elijah and Hadji Vassilij (Pilgrim Elijah Athanasius and Pilgrim Basil) from Diyarbakır (Pl. 3):

+TO AΓION MONOΣTHPION MEΓAN
IOYΣTINIANONEN ETEI XPICTOY 529.
– AΦIEPOΘH QAPA TOΘ XATZI HAIA
BAΣIAI – 529 HΣO AΓION KE
ΘEOBAΔIΣON OPOC TOY ΣINA – 1696.
+TOY XATZI BAΣIAI. – AΩO
ΔIAPMBEKIPI MEΣOΠOQTAMIAΣ TOY
XATZI HAIA ATANASIΣ

+ *The Holy Monastery of the Great Iustinianus in the year of the Lord 529. Donation Hadji Elijah Vassilij – 529 Holy and Godtrodden Mountain of Sinai – 1696. + Hadji Vassilij from Diyarbakır of Mesopotamia, Hadji Elijah Atanasij.*²

Strikingly, the iconography of the big disc and the same inscription, but now only without the names of the two donors, returns on a monastery seal, also from 1696 (Pl. 4)³. Bearing in mind that it was in this year that Sinai restored its archiepiscopal status⁴, one may suggest that not only the commissioning of the seal but also the idea to replicate it in the donation for the Burning Bush Chapel, were initiated by Ioannikios I Laskaris, the archbishop of Sinai (1671-1702). It cannot be accidental that following the same composition, the Burning Bush is also present in the central stamp of the frieze lining the fore-part of the *proskynetarion*.

The specific function of the two-disc set and prototypes that were used for the programme of the *proskynetarion*, indicate that the discs which supplement it today are a few years earlier. The question of their function finds its explanation in earlier

pilgrim travelogues, informing us about the preceding stages in the shaping of the *hierotopos*. Regarding the present monument, the depiction of the Chapel of the Burning Bush by Metropolitan Paisios Agiapistolitis of Rhodos (1577-1592) whose spiritual experience is closely related to the monastery, is of key importance⁵. He writes about a circular aperture cut in the middle of the marble stone, where one could see the roots of the Burning Bush. Thus, this source explains the purpose of the larger disc: it was meant to cover the holy relic. Information about the function of the smaller disc comes from two even earlier travelogues, the one by Niccolo di Poggibonsi from 1346-1350⁶ and the one by Noé Bianchi from 1465-1470⁷. They mention a silver cup filled with scented oil from the Burning Bush, which was placed in the aperture of the stone. We may therefore suppose that the smaller disc, which actually resembles a shallow dish, was intended to serve this function.

The two discs donated by Hadji Elijah and Hadji Vassilij seem to have kept their original position when the whole stone was covered in silver – above the panel covering the marble aperture, which too, could be opened and provided access to the relic. Thus, marking the exact location of the relic of the Burning Bush, the two discs naturally fitted within the programme of the *proskynetarion*.

In his diaries, Uspenski furnishes a very precise description of the programme of the big plate in the centre of the upper register of the *proskynetarion*, representing St Catherine. In keeping with the year mentioned in the donor inscription on the disc below it, and again referring to the donation of Hajji Elijah and Hadji Vassilij, he dated the *proskynetarion* to 1696 as well⁸. However, Uspenski apparently did not notice the less accessible inscription on its upper part, just above the two angels crowning St Catherine (Pl. 5) I had already noticed this inscription on the first working photos, but it was later photographed again by Hieromonk Gregory of Sinai, to whom I am heartily grateful for providing me with a copy. The text reads as follows:

TOYTO TΩ ΠΑΝΑΓΗΩΝ Κ' ΘΕΩΤΥΜΥΤΩΝ
ΕΡΓΩΝ ΥΓΟΥΝ Υ ΑΓΙΑ ΤΡΑΠΕΔΑΙ/ΟΡΩC
CΥΝΑ ΓΕΓΩΝΕΝ ΕΝ ΤΟΥ ΑΓΙΟΥ ΔΥΑ
CΥΝΔΡΩΜΥC ΤΩΝ/ ΔΥΑ ΚΩΠΟΥ Κ'
ΜΩΧΘΟΥ Κ' ΑΝΑCΤΕΝΑΓΜΟΥ ΚΑΜΟΥ
ΤΟΥ ΕΥΤΕΛΟΥ Κ' ΑΝΑΞΥΟΥ ΔΟΥΛΟΥ
ΚΩCΜΑ ΙΕΡΩΜΟΝΑΧΟΥ ΤΟΥ ΕΚ

² Rabino 1938, 31.

³ Παπασπράτου 1981, 160-161.

⁴ Δοσιθεος Νοταρας 1908.

⁵ Αγίπостолит, митр. Паисий 1891, 113.

⁶ Bacchi della Lega 1881, 140.

⁷ Bianchi 1606, 164.

⁸ Успенски 1856a, 166.

ΒΑΡΝΥΣ Κ' ΟΠΙΩΣ ΤΟ ΙΔΙΟΝ ΑΛΤΗΡ
ΘΕΟ[C ΝΑ] C(YΓ)ΧΟ/ ΠΕ(CEI)

This most holy and God-honouring work, i.e., the holy Table Altar, was made on the mount of Sinai at the expense, effort, endeavour, and prayers of me the insignificant and unworthy hieromonk Kosma from Varna, so that whoever sees it should say "God forgive" ⁹.

The absence of a specific year in the text makes the *proskynetarion* hard to date. On the basis of iconography and style it can be dated to the end of the seventeenth or first half of the eighteenth century. The answer to the most exciting question of who was hieromonk Kosma from Varna, the person who attested his veneration for the monastery with such a pious donation, remains for now within the sphere of hypothesizing. Without any doubt, his spiritual experience must have been closely related both to the Sinai monastery and to the Church doings on the territory of present-day North-Eastern Bulgaria. In search for the precise identity of this Kosma from Varna, a certain correspondence to a similar profile can be found in a letter written by the Jerusalem coadjutor Kosma to the Sinai churchwarden Hadjikyriakis from Vourla (Ephesus)¹⁰, who between 1688 and 1700 financed the making of woodcuts and the printing of engravings for St Catherine's¹¹.

Around 10 May 1700, the date mentioned in the letter, hieromonk Kosma was in the Danubian region (Silistra) as a coadjutor of the Jerusalemite Patriarch Dositheus II (1669-1707), and Hadjikyriakis had arrived in Wallachia from the then Polish city of Leopold (present-day Lviv, Ukraine). Kosma asks Hadjikyriakis to send him engravings and introduces himself as a former archdeacon of the Sinaitic Archbishop Ioannikios, reminding him of having once been acquainted (probably in the beginning of the 1680s, when they climbed Mount Horeb together). Kosma affirms his willingness to meet Hadjikyriakis and discuss some tasks concerning the monastery which were assigned to him by the "elder". The contents of the letter indicate that although now in the service of the Jerusalem patriarchate, the former Sinaitic archdeacon was still in touch with Archbishop Ioannikios¹². From a note written by Hadjikyriakis on the same letter we learn that the Sinai churchwarden would send engravings two or three times to coadjutor Kosma;

later, at a meeting in Wallachia, he would give him more: "I gave him as many as he wanted"¹³.

History knows many examples of representatives of the monastic clergy who, in their role of donors, would prefer to be mentioned only with their names and monastic order, but not with the administrative position they occupied at that particular moment. Their names are often complemented by topographic denominations of their place of origin, their ethnic affiliation, or the monastery to which they belonged. This was prompted by their hope to become part of the long-term memory of the respective monastic community. This tradition allows us to propose the hypothesis that the donor inscription on the Sinai *proskynetarion* envisages Kosma's birthplace Varna as the beginning of his spiritual path. Unfortunately, the lack of any documents from this period in the Varna bishopric does not allow me to comment on its possible contacts with Sinai. If we assume, however, that in the beginning of the 1680s Kosma was already Archbishop Ioannikios's archdeacon, then before he was appointed coadjutor he must have been ordained *priest* on Mount Sinai. Kosma's origin could have guaranteed easier contacts with the local clergy, and Patriarch Dositheus might have hoped for maximum results from his coadjutor's mission to collect material and financial donations in the Danubian region. Before 1700 Dositheus himself visited Northern Bulgaria several times – in 1664, 1670, 1678, 1687, and 1698 –, and in April 1703 he wrote a letter to the Cherven Bishop Dionysios (1697-1703) in which "he appeals to him to restore the collection boxes in his bishopric to raise donations for the Holy Land [...] declaring the collection boxes of other orthodox centers illegal"¹⁴.

These sources presuppose a similar situation in the neighbouring Dorostol bishopric with the city of Silistra as its centre and could explain to some degree Hadjikyriakis's doubts on the loyalty of the Jerusalemite coadjutor Kosma to the Sinai monastery. From the above mentioned note on the letter

⁹ For the translation of this text I am heartily grateful to my colleague Emanuel Mutafov. Incomplete translation of the text in Rabino 1938, 31.

¹⁰ Παπαστράτου 1981, 71.

¹¹ Παπαστράτου 1981, 9-39.

¹² Παπαστράτου 1981, 71.

¹³ Παπαστράτου 1981, 71.

¹⁴ Tjutjundjiev 2007, 228.

in question it becomes clear that Hadjikyriakis consulted the Wallachian prince Constantin Kantakoussin, who was a close friend of Archbishop Ioannikios, on sending the engravings to Silistra¹⁵.

In the second half of the seventeenth century the relations between the Patriarchate in Jerusalem and its ward the Sinai archbishopric were quite tense, so we can assume that it was rather hard to manoeuvre between the competitive interests of the two most venerated Orthodox centres, particularly for Kosma, the former Sinai hieromonk and then Jerusalem coadjutor. The delicacy of the situation he was in might explain why the inscription on his impressive donation for the Chapel of the Burning Bush does not mention a year and why he had chosen to identify himself with his city of origin only, as he was known among his former brotherhood, i.e., “Hieromonk Kosma from Varna”. Finding proof for such a hypothesis, however, requires a profound study of the archives of the monastery and the Patriarchate, something I hope to be able to realize in the near future.

Returning to the *proskynetarion*, it may be noted that underneath the donor inscription on the central panel with the depiction of St Catherine, an autograph is applied: ΕΚ ΧΙΡΩΣ ΝΙΚΟΛΑΟΥ ΚΡΗΤΗΤΗΣ, that is, “by the hand of Nikolaos from Crete”¹⁶. At first sight one inclines to identify Nikolaos as the executor of the reliefs, but as yet it remains unclear whether the *proskynetarion* was actually made by Nikolaos or if the autograph simply marks his contribution for adding the texts to the work of an artist who did not speak Greek.

In the consulted sources, I discovered that the first description of the present-day *proskynetarion* was made as early as 1722 in the diary of the Franciscan prefect of Egypt, published by the Klogher bishop, Lord Robert Clayton¹⁷. The exact year given in the inscription on the circular disc and the information

from the Egyptian prefect’s diary, therefore narrow down the date of the making of the *proskynetarion* to 1696-1722. It is hard to explain, however, why the *proskynetarion* does not feature in the travelogues of Antoine Morison from 1704¹⁸, Hippolyte Vishnevskij from 1707-1709¹⁹, and Vassilij Barski from 1728²⁰. As late as 1743 Richard Pococke added to his description of Sinai a plan of the monastery on which the Holy Communion Table from the Burning Bush Chapel is marked with the places of its four columns and the circular discs, covering the opening in the plate²¹. The fact that the silver reliefs are witnessed again only in the nineteenth century²², raises many questions which require a much more detailed historiographic research.

As far as the possible iconographic parallels for the decoration programme of the *proskynetarion* are concerned, the present study will be limited to a discussion of those panels whose dimensions and iconography find an exact parallel in a group of engravings from the end of the seventeenth century and which are published in the encyclopaedic study of Dory Papastratos²³. These are the three panels dedicated to St Catherine from the upper central part of the *proskynetarion*, the Holy map of the Sinai peninsula directly underneath, and the smaller panels to the right from these bearing the images of the Burning Bush, the Prophets Moses and Aaron before the Tabernacle, and St John Climacus’s Ladder of Divine Ascent.

The engravings in question, commissioned by Archbishop Ioannikios II Laskaris for the Sinai monastery and its convents, were made and printed in Leopold (Lviv) between 1688 and 1699 with the financial help of the afore-mentioned Sinai churchwarden Hadjikyriakis from Vourla²⁴. Their authors are Nikodem Zubrzycki – archdeacon at the Cathedral of St George, where the local printing-house was located –, and Dionizi Sinkiewicz, who signed as ‘Sinaitus’ – a hieromonk in the Monastery of St Nicolas in nearby Krekhiv²⁵. One might suppose that the iconography of the engravings was directly inspired by the *proskynetarion*, but the sources available do not support such a thesis. If the printing of the engravings was tied to the already present silver plate in the Chapel of the Burning Bush, then such an initiative on the part of Archbishop Ioannikios II would have been presented in his correspondence with Hadjikyriakis, published by Papastratos in her biographic study on the activities of the Sinai churchwarden²⁶.

¹⁵ Παπαστράτου 1981, 71.

¹⁶ The text was spelled out by Emanuel Mutafov.

¹⁷ Clayton 1753, 21.

¹⁸ Morison 1704, 110.

¹⁹ Вишенского 1904.

²⁰ Barski 1886, 23.

²¹ Pococke 1743, 151.

²² Uspenski 1856a, 166; Кондаков 1882, 40.

²³ Papastratos 1990.

²⁴ Παπαστράτου 1981.

²⁵ Deluga 1997, 381-393.

²⁶ Παπαστράτου 1981, 60-70.

In 1698, Zubrzycki made the woodblock for the woodcut of St Catherine with the six scenes from her life (Pl. 6) and a year later repeated it on a copper plate²⁷. By that time the iconography of this Alexandrian saint, showing her standing with her right hand resting on a sword and holding a palm leaf, a book or a broken martyr wheel in her left, had long been developed and widely spread in Western Europe. What Zubrzycki introduced as a compositional approach unlike the so-called 'Western models' is the Holy Mountain behind St Catherine and the image of the monastery. This *Loca Sancta* iconography of the monastery's patron saint was first introduced in 1612 by the Cretan iconographer Jeremiah Paladas²⁸ to which Zubrzycki added some elements from his own topographic engravings of Sinai made in 1688 and 1693²⁹. The presentation of the saint with a sword and the choice of the six scenes of her life are interpreted by most authors as a reflection of the close contacts of Crete and Sinai with the Church of Rome and with the influence of the available Western versions of her life from hagiographic collections printed in London (1483) and Venice (1641), respectively³⁰.

Without doubt, these influences are a fact but I would argue that Zubrzycki's choice of iconography and the particular selection of scenes actually reflect the initiatives of Archbishop Ioannikios. It cannot be missed that, both in the case of the engraving and the *proskynetarion*, four of the six *vita* scenes (Pl. 7) are explicitly connected with the parts of St Catherine's relics kept at the monastery itself and to some holy objects the tradition ascribes to her. There is an obvious stress upon St Catherine's conversion, for example, emphasized by the episodes of "Christ's turning away from the non-baptized maiden" and "The exchange of rings". This points at her left hand decorated with numerous precious rings and laid in a small reliquary, which is even now taken out to be kissed and venerated. Most of the rings were undoubtedly donated throughout the centuries by rich pilgrims, but even today the monastery maintains the legend that one of them was given to her by Christ himself during the exchange of rings.

The scenes depicting St Catherine's conversation with Emperor Maxentius and her discussion with Empress Augusta are a peculiar chronological bridge to her decapitation and angels carrying her body to Mount Sinai. St Catherine's head is kept in a marble sarcophagus near the southern altar

pilaster of the monastic church. This could explain why the scene of her martyrdom is reduced to the final episode as well as Zubrzycki's decision to depict her in the central panel, not with the legendary wheel, but victoriously resting her hand on a sword. The last scene from this short life cycle turns us to an obligatory destination in the pilgrimage to Mount Sinai, where on the peak the saint's body rested for more than four hundred years before being transferred to the monastery.

In this line of thought special attention should be paid to the topographic landscapes of Sinai included in the programme of the aforementioned five panels from the silver plate, which combine various chronological layers in the veneration directed towards the monastery and towards the God-trodden Mountain with Biblical and New Testament cults popular on Sinai. The most impressive among them is the landscape from the Holy map (Pl. 8) laid centrally beneath the patron triptych. As part of the overall idea of the *proskynetarion* to direct the pilgrims to the holy places indicating God's interventions, it is not a replica of a specific model, nor does it fit into the tendency, observed by Papastratos, to gradually unfold the surface of the mountain from left to right, to bring the seas closer together, and to narrow the space of the Sinai desert and the Egyptian lands³¹. On the contrary, as it was obviously envisaged to illustrate the holy topographies of the mountain of Moses and the mountain of St Catherine on adjacent plates, it is only the eastern part of the Sinai massif, dedicated to St Episteme, that is presented here. The saint could not have been overlooked when compiling the programme of the silver plate. According to tradition, Episteme and her husband Galaction lived here in seclusion and met their martyrs' death. The place is also memorable for a natural phenomenon which in time became one of the legendary Sinai miracles. In his description of Sinai, Metropolitan Paisios Agiapistolis tells that

²⁷ Papastratos 1990, 370, Fig. 402; 372, Fig. 403.

²⁸ Ευγγουλιος 1957, 220.

²⁹ Papastratos 1990, 343, Fig. 380, 345, Fig. 382.

³⁰ *The Golden Legend*, compiled by the Genoese Archbishop Jacob of Voragine in 1275, printed in London in 1483, and "Παράδεισος", compiled by the Cretan monk Agapios Landos, printed in Venice in 1641.

³¹ Papastratos 1990, 338-340.



Pl. 1. Chapel of the Burning Bush, Monastery of St Catherine, Sinai



Pl. 2. The proskynetarion in the Chapel of the Burning Bush (photograph: Hieromonk Gregory of Sinai)



Pl. 3. Silver discs from the donation by Hadji Elijah Vassil and Hadji Elijah Atanassij (1696) for the Chapel of the Burning Bush, (photograph: Hieromonk Gregory of Sinai)



Pl. 4. Stamp of the Monastery of St Catherine; 1696 (under archbishop Ioanikios II Laskaris 1671-1702; after Παλαστράτου 1981, 161)



Pl. 5. Donor inscription in the upper frame of the proskynetarion (photograph: Hieromonk Gregory of Sinai)



Pl. 6. St Catherine and scenes from her life. Wood engraving; Nicodemus Zubrski, 1698/1699 (Papastratos 1990, no. 402)



Pl. 7. St Catherine and scenes from her life (photograph: Hieromonk Gregory of Sinai)



Pl. 8. Holy landscape of the Sinai peninsula (photograph: Hieromonk Gregory of Sinai)



Pl. 9. Prophets Moses and Aaron before the Tabernacle of the Covenant (photograph: Hieromonk Gregory of Sinai)



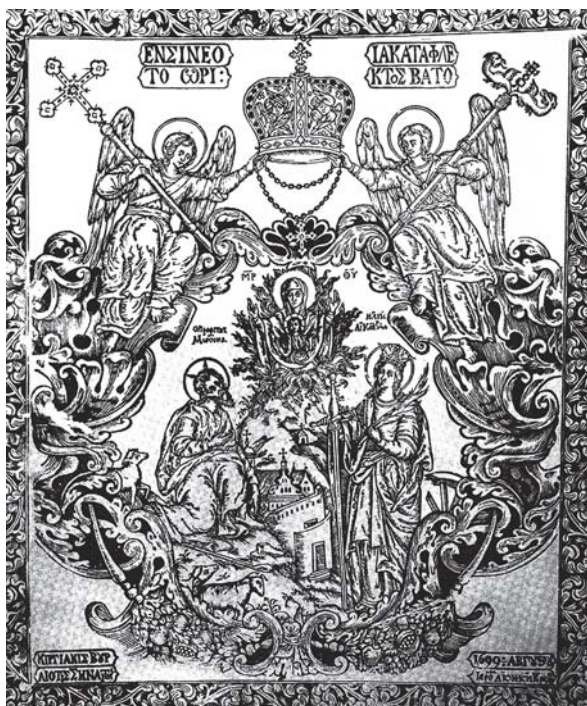
Pl. 10. Prophets Moses and Aaron before the Tabernacle of the Covenant. Wood engraving; Nicodemus Zubrziski, 1695 (Papastratos 1990, no. 415)



Pl. 11. The Ladder of Divine Ascent, wood engraving, Dionysios Sinaitus, 1699 (Papastratos 1990, no. 416)



*Pl. 12. The Burning Bush, silver relief from the proskynetarion in the Burning Bush Chapel
(photograph: Hieromonk Gregory of Sinai)*



Pl. 13. *The Burning Bush*, wood engraving; Dionysios Sinaitus, 1699 (Papastratos 1990, no. 397)



Pl. 14. *Gilt silver mitre from the times of archbishop Ioanikios II; donation by Nikiforos of Crete, the Protosykkellos of Sinai; Anastasios of Bulgarochori, 1678* (Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos 1990, Pl. 32)



Pl. 15. *The proskynetarion from the Burning Bush Chapel, St Catherine Monastery, Sinai*, (photograph: Hieromonk Gregory of Sinai)

once a year, on the day of the summer solstice when the sun rises over the mountain of St Episteme, the first sunray shines through an arch-shaped rock and the small apse window of the Burning Bush Chapel on the place where the actual bush stood³².

Although descriptions of the sunray miracle could be found in the travelogues from the mid-sixteenth century and in 1568 we see it presented in purely pictorial means in the central panel of El Greco's Modena triptych³³, its presentation would be an obligatory component in the topographic depictions of the God-trodden Mountain by the second half of the seventeenth century. It can be assumed that it was again around this time that a big wooden cross was erected above the arch-shaped opening in the rock. In 1665 it was included in the engraving of the Sinaitic monk Akakios³⁴.

Presenting only the eastern part of the Holy Mountain on the Holy map from the *proskynetarion* allowed for the whole background above the images of the monastic complex and the procession meeting the archbishop to remain free for the depiction of the Sinai desert (respectively the peninsular, enclosed between the Mediterranean and the Red Sea). In turn, the right-hand part is reserved for the Nile Delta and the architectural complexes of Alexandria, Raytu, Damietta, and Cairo. The Holy map is compositionally close to earlier versions of Sinai topography familiar to us first from an icon from the first half of the seventeenth century, published by George Sotiriou³⁵, and second from the above mentioned engraving made by Akakios. Yet, this Holy map contains also specific elements borrowed from Zubrzycki's engraving, printed in Leopolis in 1688³⁶. Compiling the models he was familiar with, the author of the relief united them under one idea – to free maximum space to illustrate the events related to Prophet Moses and God's exhortations to the Jews during their wanderings after the Exit out of Egypt

(miracles and punishments). Most of these present specific sites visited by pilgrims and which the local legends associated with the biblical tradition.

Particularly important in this respect is the composition of Moses and Aaron before the Tabernacle presented to the right of the triptych with St Catherine (Pl. 9). Just like the triptych, it also has an exact analogue in a Zubrzycki's engraving printed in 1695 and preserved on Sinai (Pl. 10)³⁷. On it the iconography of the Sinai peak behind the figure of Prophet Moses is reduced to the emblematic scene with the Tablets of Stone and the stairs, which seem to establish a connection between the two depictions of the prophet, marking the route of the holy tablets. The emphasis of the silver plate's iconographic programme obviously falls on the Tablets of Stone and the Tabernacle (the scene with the Tablets is presented on several occasions and the scene with the Tabernacle is presented both on its own and on the Holy map). The reason for this is not only the fact that the biblical topos of Horeb and the chapel dedicated to the two prophets are in immediate proximity, but also the fact that the popularity of the story relates the Tabernacle treasure with the monastery. In some travelogues we come across the local legend that the location of the Jar of Manna, the Tablets of Stone, the Censer, and Aaron's Rod is under the *synthronon* in the altar of the cathedral "as God had commanded Jeremiah to hide them in the ground"³⁸.

The panel with the Ladder of Divine Ascent (Pl. 11) points at yet another place much venerated by both monks and pilgrims: the cave where St John Climacus, once a Sinai Father Superior, lived in asceticism. The format and the iconography of the panel find their correspondence in a 1699 engraving by Hieromonk Dionysius Sinaitus³⁹. The only difference is that the three inscriptions – "Rejoice, You, Burning Bush", "Rejoice, You, God-trodden Mountain" and "Rejoice, You, Divine Ladder that God Went down by" – in the upper field of the engraving are not written in the rectangular non-punched fields in the relief, which were nevertheless left open for this purpose. Apart from the usual group of monks led by their spiritual teacher and the Ladder, the iconography of the engraving and the relief, respectively, includes also a view of part of the monastery and the Mountain of Moses, at the feet of which is St John Climacus's cave. According to tradition, it was in this very cave, so venerated by monks and so often visited by pilgrims, that the

³² Агієпостолит, митр. Паисий 1891, 113.

³³ Χατζηδάκη 1940, 356-357; Papastratos 1990, 338.

³⁴ Papastratos 1990, 341, Fig. 379.

³⁵ Σωτηρίου 1962, 1-7.

³⁶ Papastratos 1990, 343, Fig. 380.

³⁷ Papastratos 1990, 383, Fig. 415.

³⁸ Барский 1886, 24.

³⁹ Papastratos 1990, 384, Fig. 416.

saint was enlightened by his teacher – the Redeemer Himself – and then wrote the book of wisdom entitled *The Ladder of Divine Ascent*.

To the right of the Holy map the panel with the Burning Bush is located. It also corresponds to an engraving by Hieromonk Dionysius Sinaitus (no. 397) made and printed in Leopolis, again in 1699 and with the financial help of Hadjikyriakis⁴⁰. This panel is of particular interest, because it allows us to place the *proskynetarion* in its precise historical context (Pl. 12). The Burning Bush is presented at the top of the Sinai Mountain and at the feet of it part of the monastery can be seen. To the left, Moses with his flock is depicted, kneeling on a rock, taking off his sandals. To the right, St Catherine stands, resting her hand on a sword and holding a palm twig; behind her part of her broken martyr's wheel can be seen. The whole scene is framed by a stylized floral motif in the upper part of which two angels enclose the composition, crowning the Burning Bush with patriarchal insignia. This depiction combines the main Sinai symbols in a way close to a heraldic emblem; around it the relief artist has added the symbols of the holy evangelists and nine prophets: Hosea, Isaiah, Habakkuk (at the bottom), David and an unknown one (to the left), Daniel, Jeremiah, Zachariah (at the top), and Solomon (to the right).

Something very specific in the iconography of the Burning Bush from the engraving and the silver plate are the insignia, which Papastratos defines as that of an archbishop⁴¹. In this case the attribute is not particularly correct because in the period under discussion, the mitre was an attribute only of the heads of the four Great Patriarchates. Its presence as a crown above the Burning Bush both in Zubrzycki's engraving (Pl. 13) and on the *proskynetarion* plate may be seen as a reflection of the heated arguments over the rights and privileges of the Sinai archbishopric; these became particularly intense around the mid-seventeenth century and continued almost to the end of the century. They are presented in detail in the Chronicle of the Jerusalemite Patriarch Dositheus (*History of the Sinai Archbishopric*)⁴² and they specifically mention the mitre in question, with which the Sinai archbishops used to demonstrate the independence of their entrusted archbishopric (Pl. 14). It is mentioned that after being censured in 1655 Joasaph "began again to wear a mitre, but secretly and only on Sinai"⁴³; in the council decision about the second downgrading

of Archbishop Ananios, Patriarch Kalinik indignantly says: "he put a mitre on his head as if he was equal to the Patriarch; unbecomingly decorated himself with patriarchal vestments [...] he called himself most blessed and [...] began to give to the people printed absolution certificates (indulgences), shamelessly and unscrupulously decorated with images and drawings beyond all reason and order, [...] illegal and very perturbing"⁴⁴. The artefacts kept at Sinai – the three seventeenth-century mitres⁴⁵ and the depiction of the archbishop wearing a mitre in the scene with the procession meeting him in Akakios's engraving (1665)⁴⁶ from the time of Archbishop Ananios (1661-1671) – confirm the historical sources. In this respect, it is also significant that on the Holy map from the silver plate, the head of the archbishop whom the monks meet is also crowned with a patriarchal mitre.

The documents included in the abovementioned *Chronicle* of Patriarch Dositheus are reason enough to suppose that in spite of the good diplomatic relations with the Ecumenical Patriarch and the patriarchs of Jerusalem and Alexandria, Ioanikios silently supported the ambitions of his predecessor Ananios for autocephaly of the Sinai archbishopric and alignment of its status to that of the Ohrid and Cyprus archbishoprics. Important in this respect is also the fact that all the indulgences mentioned, which were printed between 1682 and 1690 in Southern Russia and spread by the former Archbishop Ananios, all bear the signature of Archbishop Ioannikios II Laskaris⁴⁷. Taken together, these historical sources, the artefacts preserved at the monastery, and the fact that the commissioning of all the engravings mentioned so far were managed by Hadjikyriakis for the then archbishop and Father Superior of the monastery allow us to suppose that even if the depiction of the patriarchal mitre in the engraving above the Burning Bush was initiated by Hieromonk Dionysius Sinaitus or by Hadjikyriakis himself, it must have been well

⁴⁰ Papastratos 1990, 363-364, Fig. 397.

⁴¹ Papastratos 1990, 363.

⁴² Δοσιθεος Νοταρας 1908.

⁴³ Δοσιθεος Νοταρας 1908.

⁴⁴ Δοσιθεος Νοταρας 1908.

⁴⁵ Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos 2006, 293, Figs 20, 31, 32.

⁴⁶ Papastratos 1990, 341, Fig. 379.

⁴⁷ Δοσιθεος Νοταρας 1908, 70; Papastratos 1990, 560, nos 598-601.

received by Archbishop Ioannikios since the engraving was printed and distributed⁴⁸.

The activity of Ioannikios indicates a large-scale campaign to attract pilgrims: he renovated and decorated the monastery and he initiated the circulation of an impressive number of engravings (about 19.000 imprints)⁴⁹; to this we can also add the fact that the biggest donations for the monastery in the seventeenth century were received during his time of management⁵⁰. Together with the fact that all the engravings used as models for the silver plate from the Burning Bush Chapel are no later than 1699, this gives me reason to claim that the place of the most holy Sinai relic took the shape of a *proskynetarion* sometime during the last years of Archbishop Ioannikios's primacy, either between 1700 and 1702, or soon after his death.

As is well-known even from the earliest days of Christianity, pilgrimage was one of the major sources for the monasteries' income. The engravings, which in the Eastern Christian tradition are witnessed first on Sinai, are a natural product of the pilgrim expansion in the second half of the seventeenth century. Due to their easy circulation and transportability, they quickly replaced the small *Loca Sancta* icons, turning into a specific pilgrim medium. Spread out with the help of the monastery, the engravings gave the pilgrims the opportunity to take with themselves a graphic memory of their mystical experience. When the many Sinai convents outside the peninsular spread these engravings, then they functioned as directions for the potential pilgrims to the relics of the God-trodden Mountain (the places marked on most Holy map engravings of Sinai were accompanied by a so-called 'key')⁵¹. In a letter from 1699, Archbishop Ioannikios asks Hadjikyriakis to send him engravings with the Holy map of Sinai and ones with depictions of St Catherine "as many as you can [...] because

outside people have learnt about them and ask our fathers about them"⁵².

This evidence refers us to George Tolia's study on the engravings of the sacred map, which also present an alternative way for spreading the Sinai topographies – an established practice for raising financial means for the monastery from the big metropolitans, when in exchange for the donation received, the monks presented the local clerical donors with engravings (the so-called 'ziti')⁵³. In this sense, the fact that the most venerated Sinai hierotopos took the shape of a *proskynetarion*, is an example of exceptional ingenuity. Bowing before the Burning Bush altar the pilgrims saw some images of Sinai relics already familiar to them from engravings, and legends about which had inspired them during their long and hard way to the God-trodden Mountain. Made of gold and silver, their effect, impressive even today under the shimmering light of the three ever-burning float-lights, must have impressed itself on their God-awakened minds. Before starting on their way back to their homelands, the monks offered them engravings so that they could take with them not only the memory of the golden Burning Bush altar, but of their whole pilgrimage; so that they could relive it again with their close ones.

By introducing this wonderful monument of pilgrimage art into the scholarly realm, I hope to broaden the circle of objects that are currently known to have been donated to the Monastery of St Catherine at Mount Sinai and which in some way are connected to Bulgaria. Among the works kept at the monastery itself are a monstrance from 1637, a New Testament cover from 1686, a silver cross from 1677 and a mitre from 1678 – the work of Athanasios of Vulgarohori, which has been attributed to an artistic school in the region of Plovdiv (Bachkovo)⁵⁴ –, the impressive Sofia *artoklasia* from 1678⁵⁵, two silver crosses from 1674 and from 1782⁵⁶, a chalice from Turnovo, and a silver frame inlaid with mother-of-pearl made in 1715 by an artist who signed it as "hieromonk Anastasias Sinaitus from Bulgaria" and designed it for the particularly venerated monastery icon of Candlemas from the second half of the sixteenth century. To these can be added a number of works of art that have been preserved in Bulgaria, including the hagiographic icons of St Catherine from Staro Zhelezare (Art Gallery Plovdiv)⁵⁷, from the Church of St George Metoshki in Assenovgrad⁵⁸, and from Veliko

⁴⁸ Παπαστράτου 1981, 18-29.

⁴⁹ Παπαστράτου 1981, 25.

⁵⁰ Uspenski 1856b, 247-255.

⁵¹ Papastratos 1990, 338-358.

⁵² Παπαστράτου 1981, 26.

⁵³ Tolia 2010, 12.

⁵⁴ Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos 2006, 271-272.

⁵⁵ Παπαμιχαλοπούλου 1932, 353; Rabino 1938; Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos 2006, 272, Fig. 24.

⁵⁶ Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos 2006, 263.

⁵⁷ Москова 2001, 23-25.

⁵⁸ Попова 1995, 31-42.

Turnovo (Regional Historical Museum). Among all these works of art, the *proskynetarion* from the Burning Bush Chapel is the product of the complex two-way relationships between the Sinai monastery and the Bulgarian lands. It is undoubtedly necessary to study these objects and connections profoundly, so that we can gain a better understanding of the inter-church contacts, pilgrim traditions, and the Christian monuments dating from the Ottoman period.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Bacchi della Lega, A. (ed.) 1881, *Libro d'oltramare di Fra Niccolò da Poggibonsi*, Vol. 2, Bologna.
- Bianchi, N. 1606, *Viaggio da Venetia al Santo Sepolcro, et al monte Sinai*, Venetia.
- Clayton, R. 1753, *A Journal from Grand Cairo to Mount Sinai, and back again: Translated from a manuscript, written by the Prefetto of Egypt, in company with some Missionaries de propaganda fide at Grand Cairo: to which are added remarks on the origins of hieroglyphics, and the mythology of the ancient heathens ...*, London.
- Galavaris, G. 1978, 'A Bread Stamp from Sinai and its Relatives', *Jahrbuch der Österreichischen Byzantinistik* 27, 329-374.
- Deluga, W. 1994, 'Les gravures orthodoxes et gréco-catholiques de la République polonaise des XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles', *Revue des études slaves* 66, 267-284.
- Deluga, W. 1997, 'Views of the Sinai from Leopolis', *Print Quarterly* 14/4, 381-393.
- Deluga, W. 2008, *Panagiotafitika. Greckie ikony I grafiki cerkiewne. Collegium Columbinum*, Krakow.
- Ikonomaki-Papadopoulos, Y. 2006, 'Church Metalwork', in: K.A. Manafis (ed.), *Sinai: Treasures of the Monastery of Saint Catherine*, Athens, 263-268.
- Morison, A. 1704, *Relation historique d'un voyage nouvellement fait au Mont du Sinai et à Jérusalem*, Toul.
- Papastratos, D. 1990, *Paper Icon: Greek Orthodox Religious Engraving, 1665-1899*, Vol. II, Athens.
- Pococke, R. 1743, *A Description of the East and Some other Countries I. Observations on Egypt*, London.
- Rabino, M.H.L. 1938, *Le Monastère de Sainte-Catherine du Mont Sinai*, Le Caire.
- Rice, T. 1930, *The Birth of Western Painting*, London.
- Tolias, G. 2010, 'Maps Printed in Greek During the Age of Enlightenment, 1665-1820', *e-Perimetron* 5/1, 1-48.
- Паисия Агипостолита, митрополита Родского, описание Святой горы Синайской и ее окрестностей в стихах, написанное между 1577 и 1592 гг. / Изд. и предисл. А. И. Пападопуло-Керамевса / Пер. Г. С. Дестуниса // ППС. Т. XII. Вып. 2(35). С. I-XX, 1-205. С. – Петербургъ.
- Барский, В. Г. 1886, Странствования Василия Григоровича-Барского по святымъ местамъ Востока съ 1723 по 1747 г. / Изданы Православнымъ Палестинскимъ обществомъ по подлинной рукописи подъ редакціею Николая Барсукова / Часть II, С. – Петербургъ.
- Вишенского, йер. Ипполит, 1914, Путешествие иеромонаха Ипполита Вишенского в Иерусалим, на Синай и Афон (1707-1709 гг.). Православный Палестинский сборник. Вып. 61.
- Досифей Нотара, 1908, Материалы для истории архиепископии Синайской горы. Приложения 18, † Досифей, Божию милостью патриарх святого града Иерусалима и всея Палестины // Православный палестинский сборник. Вып. 58. Часть 2. С. – Петербургъ.
- Кондаков, Н., Путешествіе на Синай въ 1881 году. Изъ путевыхъ впечатленій древности Синайского монастыря. Одесса.
- Москова, С. 2001, 'Пътят на Хаджията (Структурна схема на една изложба)' Проблеми на изкуството, 3, София.
- Попова, Е. 1995, 'Иконата на Св. Екатерина в църквата „Св. Георги Метошки“, Асеновград' Проблеми на изкуството, 2, София.
- Тютюнджиев Ив. 2007, Търновският епископат XII – XIX век. В. Търново.
- Успенски, арх. Профирий, 1856а, Первое путешествие въ Синайскій монастырь въ 1845 году Архимандрита Профирія Успенскаго, С. – Петербургъ.
- Успенски, арх. Профирий, 1856b, Второе путешествие архимандрита Профирія Успенскаго въ Синайскій монастырь въ 1850 году. (Въ Типографіи Морскаго Кадетскаго Корпуса). С. – Петербургъ.

* * *

- Δοσιθεος Νοταρας 1908, 'Ιστορια περι της επισκοπης του αγιου 'Ορους Σινα, στον τομο (Α. Παπαδοπουλος-Κεραμευς, Συμβολαι εις την ιστοριαν της αρχιεπισκοπης του 'Ορους Σονα, Πετροупολη).
- Ευγγουπος, Α. 1957, Σχεδιασμα ιστοριας τις Θπησκειυτικης ζωγραφικης μετα την αλωσιν. Αθηναι.
- Παπαμιχαλοπουλος Κ. 1932, 'Το Μαναστηρι του Σινα', Αθηναι.
- Παπαστράτου Ντ. 1981, Ο ΣΙΝΑΙΤΗΣ ΧΑΤΖΗΚΥΡΙΑΚΗΣ ΕΚ ΧΩΡΑΣ ΒΟΥΡΛΑ : ΓΡΑΜΜΑΤΑ ΕΥΛΟΓΡΑΦΙΕΣ 1688-1709, ΑΘΗΝΑ : ΕΡΜΗΣ.
- Σωτηριου Γ. 1962, 'Εικόν εθίμων της μονής Σινά και ιστορικόν σκηνών της ερήμου':// Δελτίον ΧΑΕ 2 (1960-1961), Περίοδος Δ', Αθηναι.
- Χατζηδάκη, Μ. 1940, Μία εικών αφιερωμένη εις το Σινά, εις 'Αφιέρωμα εις Κων. "Αμαντον, 'Αθηναι.

Proskynetarion:

One Term for Two Kinds of Jerusalemite Pilgrimage Souvenirs

Rehav (Buni) RUBIN

From way back, Jerusalem and Palestine, being the Holy City and the Holy Land, attracted Christian pilgrims from many countries and nationalities, and hence were the source of various kinds of religious memorabilia bought by the pilgrims and taken back home. The production of pilgrimage mementos is known as early as the Byzantine period, when flasks or ampullae filled with holy Jordan water were produced and sold in Jerusalem¹. It developed further with the export of sacred relics in early medieval times², and with objects made of palm trees during the crusader era. Later, decorated models of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre were made of wood inlaid with mother of pearl³. Along with them, other religious memorabilia were produced in the same technique⁴. Pilgrims even had their bodies tattooed as a testimony of their pilgrimage⁵. The variety of religious memorabilia available in the markets of Jerusalem was, and still is, extensive and includes many different items⁶. Annabel Jane Wharton, in her book on the commercialization of Jerusalem, suggested looking at these phenomena from the economic perspective⁷.

Broadly speaking, the scholarly literature on pilgrimage to the Holy Land pays more attention to pilgrims from the West than to the members of the Eastern Churches⁸. Therefore, there is only limited discussion on the sacred mementos that were produced for and bought by pilgrims from the Middle East and Eastern Europe. Actually members of the Eastern churches, in particular the Greek Orthodox Church, always formed a substantial part of the pilgrims arriving in the Holy Land, and obviously had their share in the market of sacred memorabilia⁹. Among those objects there were two different types that are both called *proskynetarion*.

The Greek term *proskynesis* originally meant adoration or worship of the gods, and later, in the Christian context, also veneration of holy places, or pilgrimage. The derivative *proskynethes* stands for a pilgrim, and *proskynetarion* (pl. *proskynetaria*) for

the act of pilgrimage or an object that is associated with it. The *Oxford Dictionary of Byzantium* gives three different meanings of the latter term: the first is 'place of worship', the second is 'travel guide to Sinai or Jerusalem', and the third is 'the monumental icon of Christ, the Virgin, or patron saint of a church'¹⁰. However, in the context of pilgrimage to the Holy Land in the seventeenth-nineteenth centuries the term is used to define the aforementioned groups of objects that were related mainly, but not exclusively, to Greek Orthodox and Slavic pilgrimage. Those objects were apparently produced in Jerusalem and its environs and bought and taken home by pilgrims as sacred souvenirs, and hence acquired their name: *proskynetarion*. The first kind of *proskynetaria* concerns icons usually painted on canvas. The second is a group of illuminated manuscripts bound as booklets that described the holy places in Jerusalem and the Holy Land through text and images. Both will be introduced in this paper and the characteristics of each of these two groups will be explored. Finally, the elements that tie them together will be discussed briefly.

PROSKYNETARION ICONS

The first type of objects defined as *proskynetarion* is a sizeable group of large-size icons which were painted on canvas, but occasionally also on wood (Pls 1-3). They were made in Jerusalem and in its

¹ Barag/Wilkinson 1974.

² Hen 1999.

³ Biddle 1999; Piccirillo 1992; *idem* 2007; Rubin 2006.

⁴ Norris 2013.

⁵ Lewy 2000.

⁶ Coccopalmerio 2001.

⁷ Wharton 2006.

⁸ Ben Arie 1970; Tobler 1867; Röhrich 1890; Klatzker 1991; Mendelson 2000; Noonan 2007; Vogel 1993; Wright 1968.

⁹ Immerzeel 2014.

¹⁰ ODB III, 1739.



Pl. 1. *Proskynetarion* icon; Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens (photograph: Byzantine and Christian Museum)

vicinity, and were then purchased by pilgrims as venerated souvenirs. To facilitate transport, the paintings were rolled or folded to fit in their luggage. Hence these icons were distributed to many places in the Near East, the Balkan and Eastern Europe, and even Western Europe.

The group of painted *proskynetaria* has received abundant scholarly attention during the last fifteen

years, and was the focus of several international symposia, which reflects the scholarly recognition of these objects as a specific and well defined genre¹¹. The outcome of the enquiries was published in a substantial number of articles dedicated to individual specimens and the general characteristics of the genre¹². Several *proskynetaria* were displayed in exhibitions and described in catalogues¹³. A data-base locating and describing over 130 specimens was produced as part of a comprehensive research project¹⁴. However, it seems that many more are still waiting to be discovered in churches and collections; some appear from time to time in art auctions¹⁵.

Most of the known *proskynetarion* icons were painted by Greek-Orthodox monk-artists and bear captions in Greek, but there are some exceptions, for example the Armenian piece in the Cathedral of St James in the Armenian quarter¹⁶. Usually these icons are rectangular and fairly large. Their width varies between one meter and two, although there are smaller ones¹⁷. Although a number of *proskynetaria* display a high artistic quality and an abundance of details¹⁸, others are fairly simple and can therefore be classified as the

¹¹ Proceedings I, 2004; Proceedings II, 2005.

¹² Immerzeel 1999; *idem* 2005; Ivanić 2006; Nagy 2006; *eadem* 2014.

¹³ Catalogue Amsterdam 2005, 59-62; Catalogue Sofia 2002; Catalogue Thessaloniki 2010, 324-325; Ćurčić/Hadjitryphonos 2010.

¹⁴ Immerzeel/Deluga/Łaptaś, 2005, 25-34. I am indebted to Dr Mat Immerzeel for sharing his broad and updated database with me.

¹⁵ See for example, Christie's auction catalogue, dated 9 June, 2008, item no. 26; Catalogue of Islamic and Indian Works of Art, Bonham's Auction, April 23, 2013, London.

¹⁶ Meinardus 1983; *idem* 2005.

¹⁷ Nagy 2006, for example, described an icon measuring 89.2 × 54.5 cm.

¹⁸ Catalogue Thessaloniki 2010, 324-325; Ćurčić/Hadjitryphonos 2010; and an icon from 1805 from a private collection (141 × 196 cm): <http://www.liveauctioneers.com/item/9713768> (retrieved 27.11.14).

work of unskilled artists¹⁹. Mat Immerzeel identified the icon in Saumur, France, that was painted in 1704 as the earliest known specimen in this group (Pl. 2), and therefore dated the whole production to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries²⁰. However, I think that a *proskynetarion* in the Byzantine Museum of Zakynthos, dated on the basis of its stylistic features to the first half of the seventeenth century, should be regarded as a forerunner of this genre²¹.

The common imagery of these icons comprises three main fields. The left and right fields are dedicated to Mary and Christ, respectively, and consist of a central image surrounded by medallions or rectangular frames representing scenes from their lives²². In the centre of the composition, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (the *Anastasis* or Resurrection in the Orthodox tradition) is depicted in the form of an architectonic elevation of the southern façade, with the belfry in the middle and the two domes (the rotunda and the catholicon) on its sides. The interior of the church includes various scenes such as the Crucifixion and the Resurrection of Christ, Sts Helen and Constantine, and the Greek Orthodox patriarch carrying the candles of the Holy Fire (Pls 1-3; see below).

The city of Jerusalem and the holy places in its vicinity are depicted as a background around the image of the Holy Sepulchre. The city walls are seen in partial or whole view. Some icons comprise buildings within the city, such as the Dome of the Rock and the Greek Orthodox monasteries and churches of Jerusalem. Other sacred sites and traditions related to the Holy Land, such as Jonah and the Whale near Jaffa and Baruch, Jeremiah's disciple, sleeping in a cave, are also displayed. The Last Judgement is often represented above the *Anastasis* and Jerusalem, and the legend of Lot and the Tree of Life is shown below.

On some *proskynetaria* a caption that identifies the owner is included, often in the lower part, but occasionally elsewhere or even at the back side. These inscriptions, usually in Greek, reveal interesting details about the production and sale of these icons. The first part encompasses a standardized formula that designates the potential buyer as "a pilgrim (*proskynetes*) to the all Holy and Life Bearer Sepulchre"²³, while the name of the actual buyer was added hastily in cursive hand-writing, often in a different colour, probably only when the object was sold and when the client wished to have his

name added. This suggests that many icons of this kind were prepared by artists throughout the whole year and offered for sale around Easter time²⁴. Furthermore, the title 'Haji' (χατζι) is occasionally added to the name of the purchaser. This title is the Turkish form of the Arabic term *Hajj*, given to a Muslim pilgrim who accomplished the pilgrimage to Mecca. The application of this Turkish-Arabic term, together with its Christian Greek equivalent (*proskynetes*) to Christian pilgrims, developed during the Ottoman period, and testifies to the Christian adoption of Muslim terms and customs. Indeed, χατζι still appears as a common prefix to many family names in Greece and Eastern Europe²⁵.

A specific subgroup of these *proskynetarion* icons, probably the early ones, represents the topographic setting of the holy places, and should accordingly be defined as iconic maps of the Holy Land (Pl. 2). Obviously these specimens do not have the aforementioned threefold layout, and as a consequence do not depict the lives of Mary and Christ, but the central position of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre remains unchanged. This image is surrounded by the churches and monasteries within the walls of Jerusalem. Outside the walls the holy places near Jerusalem, such as Mount Zion, Gethsemane, the Mount of Olives, and the Pool of Siloam, are depicted. Farther to the right side – south of Jerusalem – one finds Bethlehem, the holy places in its vicinity, and the Judaeian desert monasteries; to the left, i.e. the North, Mount Tabor with the Transfiguration and Nazareth; in the upper part, i.e. the East, the Sea of Galilee, Jordan River with the Baptism, and the Dead Sea; and on the lower part, i.e. the West, the harbor of Jaffa, and Jonah and the Whale (Figs 1-2). As a rule Lydda and St George and Gaza are also rendered. Thus, the space of the whole country is filled with iconic images of venerated places and scenes. The

¹⁹ See for example an icon in the Byzantine and Christian Museum in Athens dated 1793 (84 × 86 cm); <http://www.byzantinemuseum.gr/en/collections/paintings/?bxm=1837> (retrieved 27.11.14).

²⁰ Immerzeel 2014, 463; see also Rubin 2013, 121-124.

²¹ Georgopoulou-Verra 2003.

²² For a detailed analysis, see for example Van Aalst/Immerzeel 2005; Piatnitsky 2005.

²³ Προσκυνετής τοῦ παναγίου καὶ ζωοδόχου τάφου.

²⁴ See also Immerzeel 2014, 466.

²⁵ See also Nagy 2006.

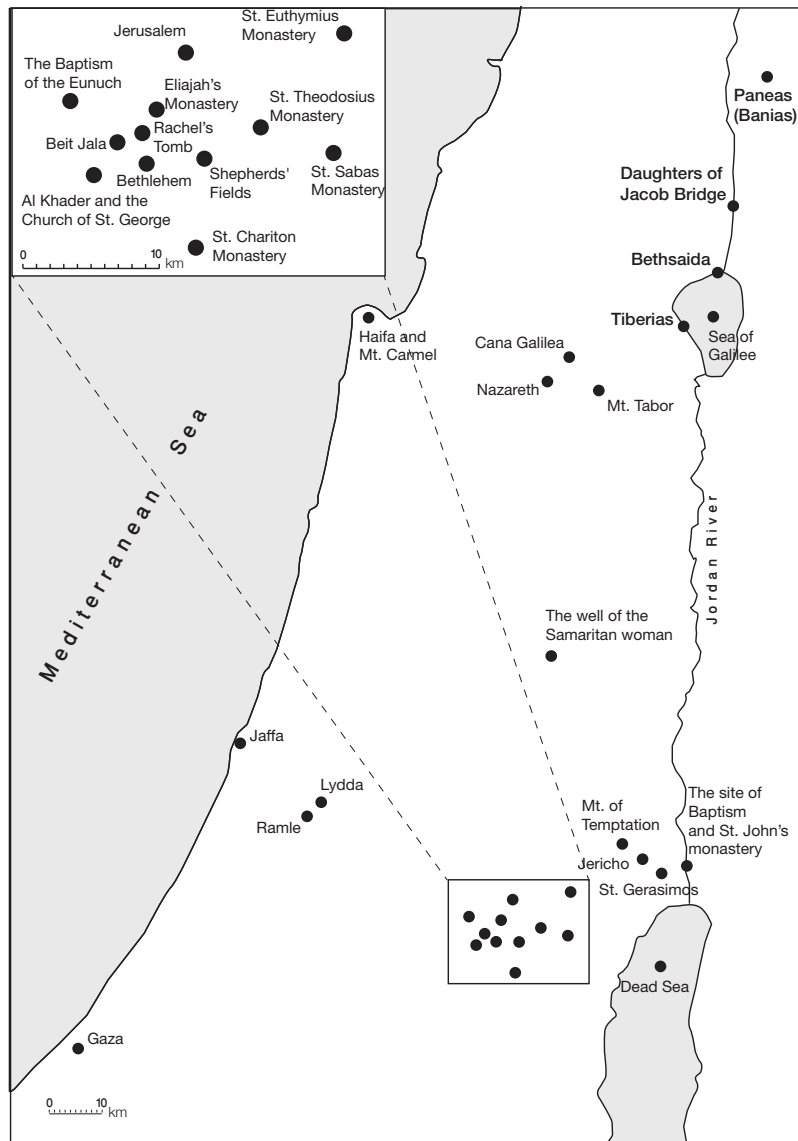


Fig. 1. Map of the holy places (Rubin 2013, Fig. 13)

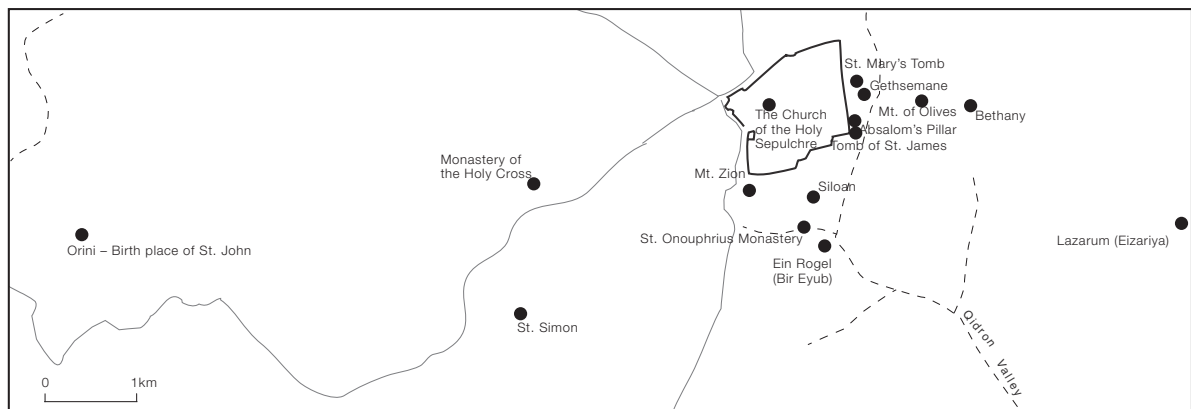
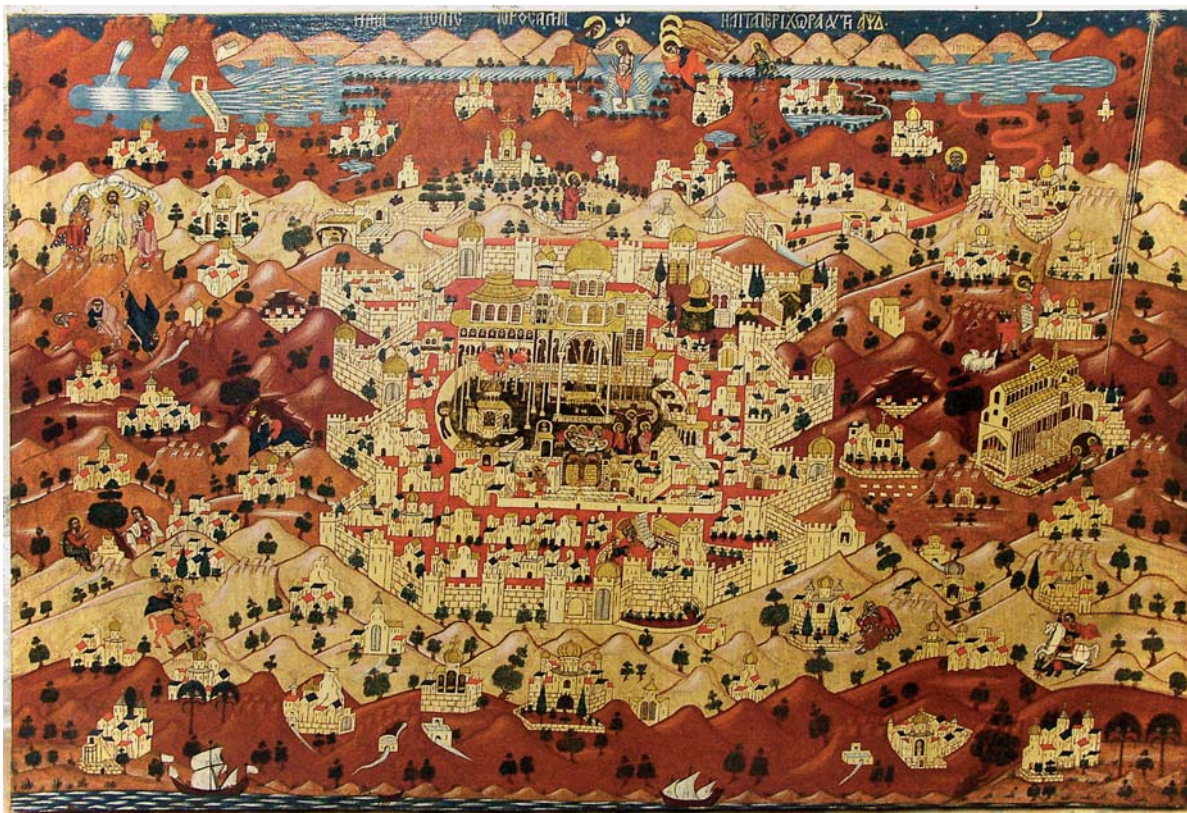


Fig. 2. Map of the holy places near Jerusalem (Rubin 2013, Fig. 14)



Pl. 2. Proskynetarion icon, 1704; Château-Musée de Saumur (photograph: Château-Musée de Saumur)

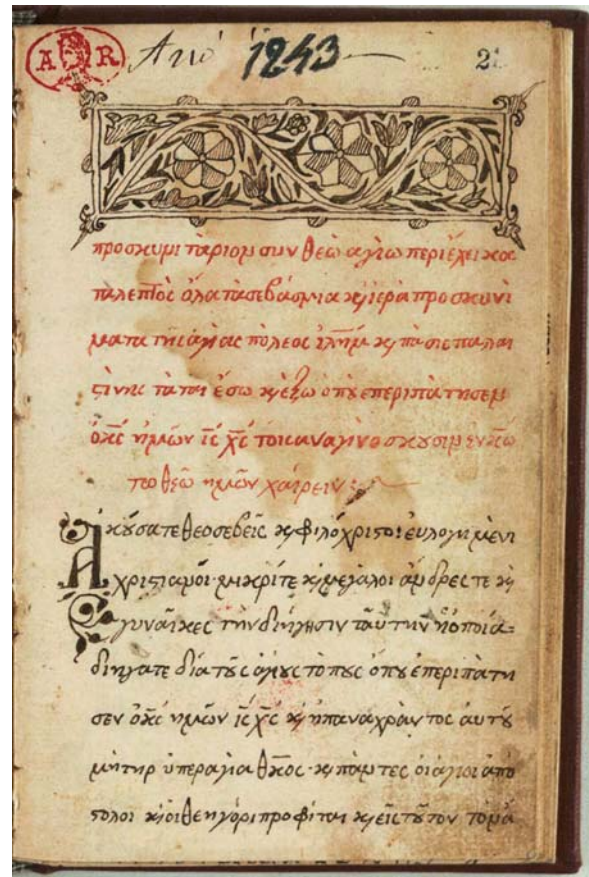


Pl. 3. Proskynetarion icon; private collection (© Christie's Images Limited [2015])

proskynetarion in Zakynthos is the earliest example of this subgroup. It was studied in detail by M. Georgopoulou-Verra²⁶, and was included in the exhibition *Architecture as Icon* held in the Museum for Byzantine Culture in Thessaloniki²⁷ and Princeton University in 2010²⁸. Three icons of this group that are kept in Coptic churches in Cairo, and another one in the Monastery of St Anthony in Egypt, were described and studied in the past²⁹. In a recent study, I analyzed the sacred topography on these and other examples from a geographical and cartographical viewpoint, identifying them as map-icons³⁰. It should be noted that there are also specimens that combine the topography of the Holy Land with the imagery of Mary and Christ. An example of this hybrid style dated A.D. 1765 was offered for sale by Christie's several years ago (Pl. 3)³¹.

PROSKYNETARION BOOKLETS

The second group of objects called *proskynetarion* consists of illustrated manuscripts that enjoyed increasing popularity from the sixteenth to the eighteenth centuries. They contain descriptions and representations of the holy places in Jerusalem and the Holy Land, and occasionally also the Monastery of St Catherine on Mount Sinai. They are defined as *proskynetaria* since the title of the text reads “*Proskynetarion* with Holy God’s help to the Holy City Jerusalem”³². In some cases the phrase “and the whole Palestine” is added (Pl. 4)³³.



Pl. 4. *Proskynetarion* booklet; front page; Academy of Sciences, Bucharest; cod. Gr. 1116, fol. 2 (photograph: Academy of Sciences).

Several of these items were described already in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries³⁴. Some of them were edited in Greek with Russian translations in the series of the Pravoslaviv Palestinian Society³⁵. Sixteen manuscripts were published by Sotiris Kadas, in particular in his highly informative monograph on this subject³⁶. Three manuscripts were published in the four-volume *Treasures from Mt. Athos*³⁷. Andreas Külzer listed most of the formerly known manuscripts and added some new ones in his comprehensive bibliographical study about Christian pilgrimage³⁸ and lately Getov described the manuscripts in Sofia³⁹. To our present knowledge, this category of manuscripts includes over thirty copies, found in Greece (Athens; Thessaloniki; several monasteries in Mount Athos; Kozani; the Monastery of St Athanasios near Kozani; and Meteora), and in Bucharest; Munich; Paris; Oxford; Sofia; Saint Petersburg; Moscow; Princeton⁴⁰;

²⁶ Georgopoulou-Verra 2003.

²⁷ Catalogue Thessaloniki 2010, 324-325.

²⁸ Ćurčić/Hadjitryphonos 2010, 310-315.

²⁹ Bagatti 1951; Meinardus 1967; Skalova 2005.

³⁰ Rubin 2013.

³¹ Christie's catalogue 2008 (note 15). This icon is reproduced here courtesy of Christie's.

³² Προσκυνητάριον σὺν Θεῷ Ἀγίῳ τῆς Ἀγίας πόλεως Ἱερουσαλήμ.

³³ Καὶ πάσης Πασλαιστίνης.

³⁴ Lampros 1895-1900; Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891-1915.

³⁵ Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1896; *idem* 1900; *idem* 1903; Bazobrazov 1901.

³⁶ Kadas 1998, with references to his earlier studies.

³⁷ Treasures from Mt. Athos 1973, Vol. 1, 368-383; Vol. 2, 94-95; Vol. 3, 174.

³⁸ Külzer 1994.

³⁹ Getov 2014.

Rome; and Jerusalem⁴¹. However, it seems reasonable to assume that examples that remain to be identified and published can be found in other collections and libraries.

The vast majority of the known manuscripts are in Greek, but there are also versions in Old Church Slavonic⁴², and even in Italian⁴³. These booklets were written in ink on paper and bound in the form of a codex in a nice, often leather binding. Their average measurements vary between 10 × 15 cm and 20 × 15 cm. Most of them are fairly concise – between 18-50 folios –, although the Munich ms is exceptionally long⁴⁴. Often the initial letters are large, decorated and written in red, green or ochre ink. As a rule, the Greek text includes many abbreviations marked by short lines or by letters written above the line. The quality of the writing and legibility varies. Some manuscripts were obviously written by skilful scribes in a clear and tidy handwriting, while in others the handwriting is less stylish and hardly legible.

Although the texts are basically identical, they display a variety of additions and changes. The same applies to the order of the sites that were visited. The text usually starts, immediately after the title with the phrase: “O listen all the blessed Christians, men and women, young and old ...”⁴⁵. Next follows a paragraph on the history and the importance of Jerusalem. The description of the Holy City begins with the Tower of David and the Jaffa Gate, where the pilgrims entered the city. Then the Church of the Holy Sepulchre is described in detail, from the entrance and through every element, each chapel, and tradition. The Feast of the Holy Fire, an official Jerusalemite event celebrated on the Saturday of the Holy Week of Easter⁴⁶, is extensively recorded. Documented first in the ninth century, the feast retains its importance to the present day⁴⁷. During the celebration the Orthodox Patriarch enters the aedicule of the tomb of Christ with unlit candles which are lighted miraculously. From these candles the crowd of pilgrims and believers light their candles.

At the end of the description of the church, the Holy Fire is described again, this time with the focus on an event that, depending on the sources, occurred in 1547 or 1580⁴⁸. The story has it that the Armenians persuaded the Ottoman governor to prevent the Greek Orthodox Patriarch from entering the church. When he and his followers started to pray outside its locked doors, the column on the

left side of the door cracked and the Holy Fire burst out of it. The Greek Orthodox commemorate this event and venerate the cracked column until now.

The texts go on describing the Temple Mount, referring to the Dome of the Rock as “the Holy” (Τὸ Ἱερόν) and to the al-Aqsa Mosque, as the Holy of Holies (Τὰ Ἁγία τῶν Ἀγίων), but entirely ignore the fact that Christian pilgrims were not allowed to visit these Islamic sanctuaries at that time. Next other places in Jerusalem and its vicinity are listed: the many minor churches and monasteries within the city walls, on Mount Zion, the Siloam, Acladama, Gethsemane, and the Mount of Olives.

The order of the descriptions of the sacred sites outside the city enables us to reconstruct several itineraries taken by the pilgrims, although the routes, or even the idea of an established visit order, are not specified as such. The first route goes east, from Mount of Olives to Bethany and Lazarium (al-Azariah), through the Monastery of St Euthymius, to Jericho, the Mount of Temptation, and the place of the Baptism of Christ in the Jordan River. A second itinerary, which in some booklets is described immediately after the first and in others later on, leads to Tiberias, the Sea of Galilee, Nazareth, and Mount Tabor. A third route goes to Bethlehem and its surroundings. In some texts it is extended to Hebron, and the famous Monastery of St Theodosius and that of St Chariton in the

⁴⁰ Kotzabassi/Patterson Ševčenko 2010, 177-181.

⁴¹ Papadopoulos-Kerameus 1891-1915, Vol. II, MSS nos 429, 545.

⁴² Klausner 1955; *idem* 1956; Rakić 2012; Weiser/Plessner 2000, no. 34, 92-93.

⁴³ Rubin/Levy-Rubin 2006.

⁴⁴ See: Bavarian State Library, Munich, Cod. Gr. 346; online edition on the library's website: <http://daten.digital-sammlungen.de/-db/0003/bsb00037545/images/>. This manuscript is larger than most of the others. The online edition includes about 400 pages, however some pages were left blank (especially next to the illustrations) and some were re-numbered as 163a, 163b, etc.

⁴⁵ “Ἀκούσατε πάντες οἱ εὐσεβεῖς Χριστιανοί, ἄνδρες τε καὶ γυναῖκες, μικροὶ καὶ μεγάλοι, ...”.

⁴⁶ Auxentios 1993; *idem* 1999.

⁴⁷ The Holy Fire was recorded for the first time by Bernard the Monk c. 870 (Wilkinson 1977, 142-144). There is a hint to this ceremony already in the Life of Theodore the Sabaite, in the eighth century, see Vincent 1912, 228-230; see also Auxentios 1993, 11-34.

⁴⁸ For 1547, see Meinardus 1961-1962, 243-252; for 1580, see Auxentios 1999, 53.

Judaean Desert. Although these complexes were deserted and in ruins at the time, they are labeled as venerated sites. Special attention was given to the Great Laura of Mar Sava (St Sabas), the most important monastery in the wilderness of Judea and the only one that remained inhabited through the ages⁴⁹.

A one day route leads to sites west of Jerusalem: the Monastery of the Holy Cross, the house or tower of St Simon, the birthplace of St John the Baptist⁵⁰, and the fountain where Philip baptized the eunuch of the Candace of Ethiopia⁵¹. On their way back home, the pilgrims went to Emmaus, the Church of St George in Lydda, and Ramle (identified as Arimathea), and finally Jaffa. Several manuscripts also describe Jacob's well near Nablus, while others mention Gaza as the city of Samson. In a few booklets, a supplementary chapter describes the long and arduous voyage through the desert to the Monastery of St Catherine in Mount Sinai.

The Illustrations

The digressions on the holy places are accompanied by illustrations which are integral parts of the layout. Large images were drawn on separate pages, but the smaller ones were inserted into the related text. As a whole, the different manuscripts present a common set of illustrations, depicting the same buildings and places and using similar graphic patterns with minor variations. Like the handwriting, the artistic quality of the illustrations varies. If in

some manuscripts the images are reduced to simple sketches, others are skillfully illustrated in rich colors.⁵²

Regarding Jerusalem, the common imagery comprises the Tower of David, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as well as the aedicule built over the tomb and the stone of Unction; the Dome of the Rock and the al-Aqsa Mosque; minor churches and monasteries within the walls of Jerusalem; the holy places in Mount Zion, Gethsemane, and the sacred sites near the Kidron Brook, and the Mount of Olives. Beyond Jerusalem, the images depict Bethany, Jericho, and the Jordan River; Tiberias, Mount Tabor, and Nazareth; the monasteries in Judean Desert; Bethlehem and sites in its vicinity; Hebron; a group of sites west of Jerusalem including the Monastery of the Holy Cross and the birthplace of St John the Baptist; and towns in the coastal plain, such as Gaza, Lydda, and Jaffa. Occasionally geographical elements are featured, such as the Jordan River, the Dead Sea, and the Sea of Galilee, which were also visited by the pilgrims along their route. Moreover, several manuscripts also render particular subjects such as the ship on which the pilgrims had arrived⁵³.

It should be noted that the realistic rendering of some of the sites testify to eye-witness knowledge. This is best illustrated through the images of the façade of the Holy Sepulchre, drawn as an architectural cross-section seen from the South, and those of the Laura of Mar Sava, which is rendered as a large complex of buildings surrounded by a wall with two prominent towers (Pl. 5).

Fifteen of the manuscripts end with a colophon furnishing the name of the scribe, his title, and occasionally where and when the booklet was written. It seems that many of them were made in the monasteries linked to the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in Jerusalem, whereas others were produced in the Laura of Mar Sava. Most of the scribes that signed their name were monks who bore the typically Jerusalemite title *Hieromonachos* (ἱερομοναχός). Four specimens were signed by a single scribe and artist, Daniel the Physician (Δανιήλ ὁ ἱατρός), a monk in Mar Sava⁵⁴, whose writings and illustrations are of very high quality. The Munich manuscript was written and signed by Akakios, Hieromonachos of Crete (Ἀκακίου ἱερομοναχοῦ τοῦ Κρητῶς). He worked in Jerusalem and dedicated it to Ananias (Ἀνανίας), the *protosyncellos* of the patriarch of Jerusalem⁵⁵. In sum, the colophons reveal

⁴⁹ Patrich 1995.

⁵⁰ The birthplace of John the Baptist is identified with the village of Ein Karim, today a suburb of Jerusalem, about 8 kms west of the old city. It is known in Greek as Orini (Ορινή).

⁵¹ The site of the Baptism of the eunuch (Acts 8: 26-39) was identified at that time in Ein Hanniya, about 8 kms south-west of Jerusalem.

⁵² For the classification of three stylistic groups, see Kadas 1998.

⁵³ In the manuscripts in St Petersburg (Cod. Gr. 118, fol. 41b; Kadas 1998, 203), and Bucharest (Cod. Gr. 396 (252) fol. 35b; *ibidem*, 153).

⁵⁴ The manuscripts signed by Daniel are: Rome Cod. Gr. 15; Athos Doucheriou 129; Athos Gregorios 159; and Athens, Byzantine and Christian Museum, 121. See Hadjidakis 1987, Vol. 1, 256; Kadas 1985, 1280-1302.

⁵⁵ Rubin/Levy-Rubin 2006. The term *protosyncellos*, literally a cellmate, refers to a monk who is connected to the patriarch, and serves as his secretary or deputy.



Pl. 5. *The Laura of Mar Sava*, Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens, ms. 121, fol. 23b; inv. no. BXM01624 (photograph: Byzantine and Christian Museum)

the Jerusalemite origin of the booklets and the involvement of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate in their production.

Considering the fact that the descriptions and illustrations, as well as their shape and dimensions, display a high degree of standardization, the booklets were anything but accounts of individuals. In summary, the texts do not describe the visit to holy places as an itinerary, neither by writing in the first person, or by presenting the whole as a personal experience. They also not contain any practical information typical of personal travelers' accounts, such as accommodation facilities, food, and markets, comments on the flora and fauna or any reference to the local population. The aforementioned customary opening phrase "O listen all the blessed Christians, men and women, small and big to this description of the Holy Places ...", suggests that the booklets aimed at introducing the holy places to a broad audience, rather than that they functioned as diaries of or guides for travelers or pilgrims. It seems that this coherent group was made in monastic workshops working under the auspices of the Patriarchate. These ateliers produced such booklets in large numbers on behalf of the clientele of visiting pilgrims. Once returned from their voyage, they could share their experience by reading from these booklets and showing the images to their relatives and members of their community who were unable to undertake the expensive and hard pilgrimage.

LINKS BETWEEN THE PROSKYNETARION ICONS AND BOOKLETS

A comparative study of the designs that were applied by both icons painters and illustrators reveals the strong links between the two groups. Illustrative in this matter is the standardized rendering of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre as an architectonic cross section with the belfry in the centre, the rotunda on the left, and the catholicon on the right (Pls 1-3, 6). This image is the focal

point of the *proskynetarion* icons, and is certainly the most preeminent representation in the *proskynetarion* booklets. Moreover, the tripartite design of the church strongly corroborates the explicit textual statements about its symbolic value as a reference to the Holy Trinity.

The compositional similarities between the icons and the illustrations is also reflected in the realistic rendering of the Laura of Mar Sava with its two towers and the ropes with bells, which is shown on the painted *proskynetaria* in Zakynthos and Saumur, for example, as well as in many of the booklets (Pls 2, 7)⁵⁶. The same applies to the way the Sea of Galilee is depicted as two connected basins, for instance on the Saumur icon and in a booklet in Bucharest (cod. Gr. 1116; Pls 2, 8).

The similarities and consistence of the corpus of sacred places, descriptions, and images suggest that the icons and booklets were both products of the same atelier or workshop that functioned in Jerusalem and/or Mar Sava under the auspices of the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate. In this workshop monks-artists painted the icons and copied and illustrated the booklets. Although some of the images representing holy places are plainly schematic, others display a high level of reality, and thus testify to the unmediated familiarity of the artists with these venerated sites.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

We discussed here two groups of ecclesiastical artifacts, icons and booklets, both were produced and sold in Jerusalem as pilgrimage memorabilia. Given that the products of this atelier were sold to pilgrims who took them back home as sacred souvenirs, they fully deserve to be named *proskynetaria*. The content of these memorabilia presented the Holy Land as a sacred landscape, and the Greek Orthodox Patriarchate as its guardian and protector. The wide proliferation of these mementos is a testimony to the large numbers of pilgrims that came at that time and to the memorabilia market. The decline of the copying and distribution of the booklets followed probably from the introduction of similar printed *proskynetarion* books in the mid-eighteenth century. These books were written in Jerusalem but printed in Europe, mainly in Venice and Vienna, as there was no printing press in Jerusalem till the mid nineteenth century⁵⁷. These printed *proskynetarion* books should be studied in

⁵⁶ The image of Mar Sava was copied later on a map that was included in the printed *proskynetarion* by Chrysanthos. See Notaras, 'Ιερογγραφία ..., in: Notaras 1728; for this, see Rubin 2006a.

⁵⁷ Suleiman 2009.

Pl. 6. The façade of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre



a. Present situation (photograph: Rehav Rubin)



b. Proskynetarion icon; Monastery of St George, Jerusalem (photograph: Rehav Rubin)



c. Proskynetarion booklet in Italian; collection of Dr David and Jemima Jeselohn, Zurich Proskynetarion booklet in Serbian; National Library of Israel (photograph: National Library of Israel)



d. Proskynetarion booklet in Serbian; National Library of Israel (photograph: National Library of Israel)

Pl. 7. The Laura of Mar Sava



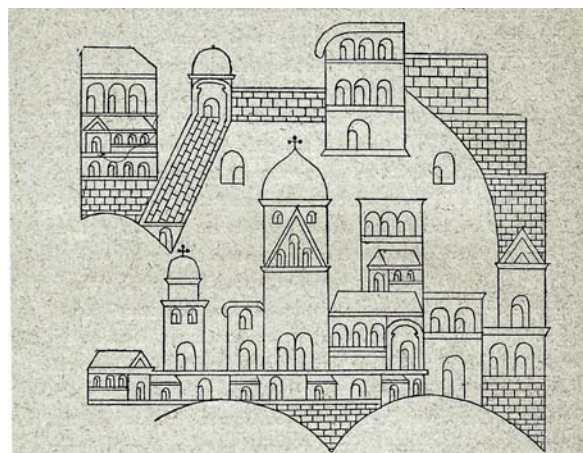
a. Present situation (photograph: Rehav Rubin)



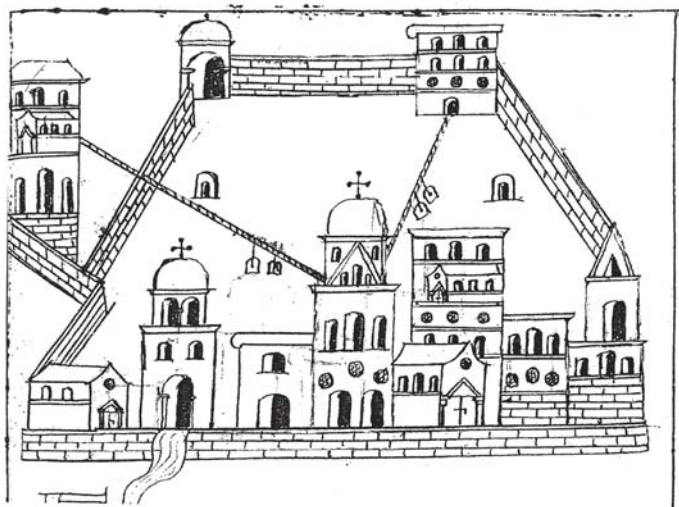
b. Proskynetarion icon, Byzantine Museum, Zakynthos (photograph: Byzantine Museum)



c. Proskynetarion icon, Saumur; detail of Pl. 2



d. Proskynetarion booklet, Rome (Bazobrazov 1901, 22)



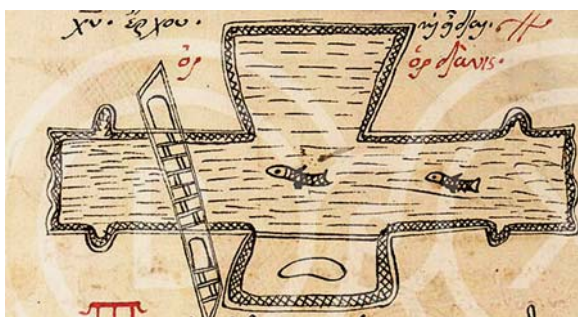
e. Proskynetarion booklet in Italian; collection of Dr David and Jemima Jeselsohn, Zurich, Switzerland



a. Proskynetarion icon, Saumur; detail of Pl. 2



b. Proskynetarion booklet; Academy of sciences, Bucharest, Ms. Gr. 1116, fol. 27r (photograph: Academy of sciences)



c. Byzantine and Christian Museum, Athens, ms. 120, fol. 30v (photograph: Byzantine and Christian Museum)

another research project⁵⁸. The decline of the painted proskynetarion followed later with the development of large printed images⁵⁹, and especially with the development of the photographed images⁶⁰.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Auxentios, Bishop of Photiki, 1993, *A Study of the Rite of the Holy Fire at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem*, Ann Arbor, MI.
- Auxentios, Bishop of Photiki 1999, *The Paschal Fire in Jerusalem: A Study of the Rite of the Holy Fire in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre*, Berkeley, CA.
- Bagatti, B. 1951, 'Una Veduta inedita di Gerusalemme e dintorni', *Liber Annuus* 1, 247-261.
- Barag, D., J. Wilkinson 1974, 'The Monza-Bobbio Flask and the Holy Sepulchre', *Levant* 6, 179-187.
- Bazobrazov, P.V. 1901, 'Anonymous Proskynetarion of Jerusalem and other Holy Places, 17th Cent.', *Pravoslavica Palestinian Society*, Vol. 54 (in Greek with Russian Translation).
- Ben Arich, Y. 1970 *The Rediscovery of the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*, Jerusalem.
- Biddle, M. 1999, *The Tomb of Christ*, Stroud.
- Catalogue Amsterdam 2005: *Byzantine Jerusalem, Pilgrim Treasures from the Hermitage*, Amsterdam.
- Catalogue Sofia 2002, *Pilgrims in the Holy Land*, Sofia (in Bulgarian).
- Catalogue Thessaloniki 2010, *Architecture as Icon: Perception and Representation of Architecture in Byzantine Art*, Thessaloniki (in Greek).
- Chrysanthos of Brusa 1787, *Proskynetion of the Holy City Jerusalem*, Vienna (in Greek).
- Coccopalmerio, M. 2001, *Il Ritorno del Pellegrino, Eulogie di Terra Santa*, Genova.
- Ćurčić, S., E. Hadjitryphonos, 2010, *Architecture as Icon: Perception and Representation of Architecture in Byzantine Art*, New Haven.
- Della Dora, V. 2013, 'Mapping Pathways to Heaven: A Topographical Engraving of Meteora (1782)', *Imago Mundi* 65/2, 217-233.
- Georgopoulou-Verra, M. 2003, 'Topography of the Holy Land on an Icon in Zakynthos', *Deltion of the Christian Archaeological Society* 24, 317-332 (in Greek with abstract in English).
- Getov, D. 2014, *A Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts at the Ecclesiastical Historical and Archival Institute of the Patriarchate of Bulgaria*: Vol. 1: *Bačkov Monastery*, Turnhout.
- ⁵⁸ Notaras 1728; Simeon 1749; Pissidios 1758; Chrysanthos of Brusa 1787; Ioanides 1867; Zhefarovich 1748.
- ⁵⁹ Della Dora 2013.
- ⁶⁰ Immerzeel 2017.

- Hadjidakis M. 1987, Χατζηδακής, Μ. *Ελληνες Ζωγράφοι Μετα την Αλωση (1450-1830)*, Athens.
- Hen, Y. 1999, 'Les authentiques des reliques de la Terre Sainte en Gaule franque', *Le Moyen Age* 105/1, 71-90.
- Immerzeel, M. 1999, 'Proskynetaria from Jerusalem', *ECACME* 2, 53-62.
- Immerzeel, M. 2005, 'Proskynetaria from Jerusalem: Souvenirs of a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land', *Series Byzantina*, 3, 9-24.
- Immerzeel, M. 2014, 'Souvenirs of the Holy Land: The Production of Proskynetaria in Jerusalem', in: Kühnel/Noga-Banai/Vorholt 2014, 463-470.
- Immerzeel, M. 2017, *The Narrow Way to Heaven. Identity and Identities in the Art of Middle Eastern Christianity*, Leuven (OLA 259).
- Immerzeel, M. Deluga, W. Łaptaś, M. 2005, 'Proskynetaria: Inventory', *Series Byzantina* 3, 25-34.
- Ioanides B. 1867, *Proskynetarion of the Holy City Jerusalem ...*, Jerusalem (in Greek).
- Ivanić, B. 2006, 'Pilgrimage in Medieval Serbia and Proskynetaria. Pilgrims' icons from Jerusalem', *Series Byzantina* 4, 55-69.
- Kadas, S. 1985, 'The Calligraph and Micrograph Daniel the Physician and His Work (2nd half of 17th century)', *Byzantina* 13, 1280-1302 (in Greek).
- Kadas, S. 1998, *The Holy Places, Illuminated Proskynetaria, 17th-18th Centuries*, Athens (in Greek).
- Klatzker, D. 1991, 'American Christian Travelers to the Holy Land 1821-1939', in: M. Davies, Y. Ben Arie (eds), *With Eyes Towards Zion*, Vol. 3, New York, 63-76.
- Klausner, Y.A., 1955, 'The Account of the Holy Places in a Christian Serbian Manuscript', *Kiryat Sepher* 30, 440-444, (in Hebrew).
- Klausner, Y.A. 1956, 'Description de lieux saints de Palestine dans un manuscrit slavons', *Revue des Études Slaves* XXXIII, 105-108.
- Kotzabassi A., N.P. Ševčenko 2010, *Greek Manuscripts at Princeton, Sixth to Nineteenth Century: A Descriptive Catalogue*, Princeton, N.J., 177-181.
- Kühnel, B., G. Noga-Banai, H. Vorholt (eds) 2014, *Visual Constructs of Jerusalem*, Turnhout (Cultural Encounters in Late Antiquity and the Middle Ages 18).
- Külzer, A. 1994, *Peregrinatio graeca in Terram Sanctam, Studien zu Pilgerführern und Reisebeschreibungen über Syrien, Palästina und den Sinai aus byzantinischer und metabyzantinischer Zeit*, Frankfurt am Main/Berlin/Bern/New York/Paris/Wien (Studien und Texte zur Byzantinistik, Bd. 2).
- Lampros, S. P. 1895-1900, *Catalogue of the Greek Manuscripts on Mount Athos*, Cambridge.
- Lewy, M. 2000, 'Towards a History of Jerusalem Tattoo Marks among Western Pilgrims', *Cathedra* 95, 37-66 (in Hebrew).
- Meinardus, O. 1961-1962, 'The Ceremony of the Holy Fire in the Middle Ages and Today', *BSAC* 16, 243-252.
- Meinardus, O. 1967, 'Greek Proskynetaria of Jerusalem in Coptic Churches in Cairo', *SOCC* 12, 311-341.
- Meinardus, O. 1983, 'The Armenian Jerusalem Proskynetarion at St. James in Jerusalem', *REA* 17, 457-462.
- Meinardus, O. 2005, '17th-Century Armenian Proskynetaria of Jerusalem', *Studia Byzantina* 3, 35-51.
- Mendelson, D. 2000, *Jerusalem, ombre et mirage: vision des écrivains et des artistes du XIX^e siècle*, Paris.
- Nagy, M. 2006, 'Demeter Hadzsi's Proskynetarion in Jászberény', *Series Byzantina* 4, 39-53.
- Nagy, M. 2014, 'Proskynetaria as Devotional Objects and Preservers of Ethnic Identity', in: Kühnel/Noga-Banai/Vorholt 2014, 471-477.
- Noonan, F.T. 2007, *The Road to Jerusalem: Pilgrimage and Travel in the Age of Discovery*, Philadelphia.
- Norris, J. 2013, 'Exporting the Holy Land: Artisans and Merchant Migrants in Ottoman-era Bethlehem', *Mashriq and Mahjar* 2, 14-40.
- Notaras, C. 1728, *Historia et Descriptio Terrae Sanctae Urbisque Sanctae Hierosalem*, Venice (in Greek with Latin title).
- Notaras, C., 1728 (map), 'Ἰχνογραφία Ἀληθὴς τῆς Ἀγίας Πόλεως Ἱεροσολήμ ...', in: Notaras 1728.
- Papadopoulos-Kerameus, A. 1891-1915, *Catalogue of the Library of the Orthodox Patriarchate of Jerusalem*, 5 Vols, St Petersburg.
- Papadopoulos-Kerameus, A. 1896, 'Three 16th-Cent. Greek Proskynetaria', *Pravoslavlic Palestinian Society*, Vol. 46 (in Greek with Russian translation).
- Papadopoulos-Kerameus, A. 1900, 'Anonymous Proskynetarion of Jerusalem and other Holy Places', *Pravoslavlic Palestinian Society*, Vol. 53 (in Greek with Russian translation).
- Papadopoulos-Kerameus, A. 1903, 'Eight Greek Descriptions of the Holy Places, 14th, 15th, 16th Cent.', *Pravoslavlic Palestinian Society*, Vol. 56 (in Greek with Russian translation).
- Patrich, J. 1995, *Sabas, leader of Palestinian monasticism: a comparative study in Eastern monasticism, fourth to seventh centuries*, Washington, D.C., Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection.
- Piatnitsky, Yu. 2005, 'Pilgrims' Eulogias from the Holy Land in the Hermitage Museum collection, St. Petersburg', *ECA* 2, 105-119.
- Piccirillo, M. 1992, 'Un modellino della basilica del Santo Sepolcro di Gerusalemme conservo a Malta', in G. Airaldi (ed.) *Le Vie del Mediterraneo*, Genova, 69-83.
- Piccirillo, M. 2007, *La Nuova Gerusalemme: Artigianato Palestinese Al Servizio Dei Luoghi Santi*, Bergamo.
- Pissidios, S. 1758, *Proskynetarion of the Holy City*, Leipzig (in Greek).
- Proceedings I = Proceedings of the first symposium, held in Warsaw in 2003, see: *Series Byzantina* 2 (2004).
- Proceedings II = Proceedings of the Symposium 'Proskynetaria: Pilgrim's Souvenirs from the Holy Land (18th-19th century)' Hernen Castle, 11 September 2004, see: *ECA* 2 (2005), 77-167.
- Rakić, Z. 2012, *Srpska minijatura XVI i XVII veka*, Beograd (in Serbian).
- Röhricht, R. 1890, *Bibliotheca Geographica Palaestinae*, Berlin.
- Rubin, R. 2006, 'Relief Maps and Models in the Archives of the Palestine Exploration Fund in London', *Palestine Exploration Quarterly* 138,1, 43-63.
- Rubin, R. 2006a, 'One City, different views: A Comparative Study of Three Pilgrimage Maps of Jerusalem', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32, 267-290.

- Rubin, R. 2013, 'Greek-Orthodox Maps of Jerusalem from the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Centuries', *e-Perimetro* 8,3, 106-132.
- Rubin, R., M. Levy-Rubin 2006, 'An Italian Version of a Greek-Orthodox Proskynetarion', *OC* 90, 184-201.
- Simeon, 1749, *Proskynetarion of the Holy City*, Wien (in Greek).
- Skalova, Z. 2005, 'A Holy Map to Christian Tradition: Preliminary Notes on Painted Proskynetaria of Jerusalem in the Ottoman Era', *ECA* 2, 93-103.
- Suleiman, M.B. 2009, 'Early Printing Presses in Palestine: A Historical Note', *Jerusalem Quarterly* 36, 79-91
- Tobler, T. 1867, *Bibliographia Geographica Palaestinae*, Leipzig.
- Treasures from Mt. Athos, 1973, (Οἱ Θεσσυροί τοῦ Ἁγίου Ὁρους), Athens (in Greek).
- Van Aalst, V., M. Immerzeel 2005, 'The Proskynetarion of Hernen Castle', *ECA* 2, 83-91.
- Vincent, L.H. 1912, *Jérusalem Nouvelle*, Paris 1912.
- Vogel, L. I. 1993, *To see a Promised Land, Americans and the Holy Land in the Nineteenth Century*, University Park, PA.
- Weiser, R., R. Plesser 2000, (eds), *Treasures Revealed: from the Collections of the Jewish National and University Library, Jerusalem* (in Hebrew and English).
- Wharton, A.J. 2006, *Selling Jerusalem: relics, replicas, theme parks*, Chicago.
- Wilkinson, J. 1977, *Jerusalem Pilgrims before the Crusades*, Jerusalem.
- Wright, T. 1968, *Early Travels in Palestine*, New York (first published 1848).
- Zhefarovich, Kh. 1748, *Orisanie na Erusalim*, Wien (reprint ed. Sofia 1986).

Serpent or Furled Sail: An Analysis of the Ships in the Madaba Map

Yael WILFAND*

INTRODUCTION

Since its rediscovery in 1896, the Madaba map has attracted scholarly attention. Located near the north-eastern shore of the Dead Sea and dated from the sixth century CE, this map originally depicted the Eastern Mediterranean from Egypt to Lebanon and Syria, focusing on the Holy Land, with many biblical sites labelled with Greek epigraphy. Researchers have studied various aspects of this mosaic map, from investigations of its purpose and stylistic characteristics to knowledge of geography in Late Antiquity. It has been examined in comparison to other Byzantine mosaics in Transjordan and to contemporaneous Christian writings as well as to earlier artistic and literary works that may have inspired its production. A number of scholars have also considered the Nilotic, geographical and maritime representations in this map.

To date, only nautical studies have analysed the ships in the Madaba map (Pls 1-4). Zaraza Friedman views them as symbolizing marine commerce during that period: “The sailing ships in the Madaba Map mosaic augment the importance of the Dead Sea as a trading sea-line between Middle East, Arabia and Egypt throughout the centuries”¹. Friedman and other scholars discuss these ships in the context of Byzantine shipping by comparing them to other vessels and theorizing about their

cargo². The ship on the left, due to its unusual sail, has received more attention: while Michael Avi-Yonah and Herbert Donner describe it as a furled sail³, Baruch Rosen and Friedman posit that the mosaicist misconstrued this nautical element. Rosen claims that: “No such error is known in other representations of Roman-Byzantine boats”⁴. In this article I reconsider scholarly treatment of this ship (and the less discussed vessel to its right), proposing that its sail does not reflect a misinterpretation but, to the contrary, has Christian symbolic value. This study is based on the notion that, when an object that features well-known Christian symbols is positioned at the centre of artwork in a church, it may safely be assumed that those responsible for its planning and execution, along with those who observed it, would have ascribed religious meaning to that depiction. Thus, the interpretation of the ship on the left, and these ships as a pair, in the context of Christian iconography of Late Antiquity, contributes to our understanding of this map and its significance.



Pl. 1. Madaba mosaic map: the Dead Sea (Courtesy of Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem)

* I extend thanks to Eugenio Alliata, Erin Derby, Michael Perry, Tamar Traub Ben-Shalom, Menachem Ben Shalom, and Ehud Halevy for our discussions of this topic and their assistance in attaining materials that relate to this study; to Steven Fine and Lucas Van Rompay for their insightful advice; and to Mat Immerzeel for his helpful suggestions. The images of the Madaba map presented here appear courtesy of the Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem. I am grateful for their permission to include them in this publication.

¹ Friedman 2012. I thank her for providing me with a copy of this article. See also Grossmann 2011, 44, who comments that “The marine life illustrated on the Madaba Map express the general prosperity of the Byzantine period, when fishing and overland trade in the region flourished”.

² While some scholars define these vessels as boats, I follow Friedman by referring to them as ships. When considering the Christian symbolism of nautical objects, the differentiation between types of vessels is not always clear.

³ Avi-Yonah 1954, 38; Donner 1992, 37.

⁴ Rosen 1986, 98.



Pl. 2. Madaba mosaic map: the large ship (on the left), as depicted in the left portion of the Dead Sea
(Courtesy of Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem)



Pl. 3. Madaba mosaic map: the two ships in the Dead Sea, with Jerusalem beneath (a column from the current church is visible in the lower-right corner; Courtesy of Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem)



Pl. 4. Madaba mosaic map: the smaller ship, as depicted in the right portion of the Dead Sea (a column from the current church is visible in the lower-right corner; Courtesy of Studium Biblicum Franciscanum of Jerusalem)

The ship on the left side of the Dead Sea is depicted with two seated sailors (Pls 1-3)⁵. Major portions of their bodies have been damaged by iconoclasts and their original stones have been randomly rearranged⁶. We can still see that one of the sailors is holding a pair of oars, while the other is making a gesture with his right arm. Between these two sailors is a mound of white material, probably salt. A mast with yard, in the shape of a cross, rises from that spot. The sail is furled around the yard, resembling a serpent. Neither a backstay nor brails are connected to this sail⁷. In his 1954 commentary on the Madaba map, Avi-Yonah describes this as a folded sail⁸. In 1986, Rosen offers a critique of this description, claiming that: "The mosaicist's rendering of the furled sail as rolled and coiled around the yard is an absurdity" since without "a system of rings and brails" the sail would be useless⁹. Rosen asserts that this portrayal did not follow "a master copy" but was "probably reproduced from memory or from a first-hand sketch by a landlubber"¹⁰. Recently, Friedman portrayed this furled sail as "a serpent coiled around the yard" and ascribed it to "a misinterpretation of the mosaicist who probably did not understand how to show a furled sail beneath the yard"¹¹. Eva Grossmann likewise claims that the sail "is furled around the yard like a snake", suggesting that perhaps "the artist wanted to give the sail an artistic form reflecting the picture of the waves"¹². I accept this description of the "furled sail" as a snake. The absence of both rigging and "a system of rings and brails" further supports the hypothesis that this object is a snake rather than a sail. Moreover, a survey of other mosaic pavements from this period and earlier centuries shows that serpents were frequently constructed from rows of light and dark stones to emphasize the contours of their bodies, often with lighter stones placed to represent the underbelly, just like the furled sail of the left ship in the Madaba map¹³.

However, in contrast to previous assessments, I view its design to be deliberate, albeit Christian rather than nautical: a cross with a serpent winding around its horizontal pole, which would have been meaningful and familiar in the sixth-century Byzantine context. In Numbers 21:6-10, God instructs

Moses to forge a bronze serpent and to mount it on a rod:

And the LORD said to Moses, "Make a poisonous serpent, and set it on a pole; and everyone who is bitten shall look at it and live." So Moses made a serpent of bronze, and put it upon a pole; and whenever a serpent bit someone, that person would look at the serpent of bronze and live (Num. 21:8-9; NRSV).

In the New Testament, that brazen serpent is identified as "a type of crucified Christ"¹⁴: "And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life" (John 3:14-15; NRSV). This interpretation is also found in

⁵ According to Avi-Yonah (1954, 38) this ship is heading north. According to Friedman (2012, 385) these two ships are "sailing from north to south".

⁶ On the disfigurement of the images of these sailors, Avi-Yonah (1954, 25) writes: "Unfortunately all these have been badly damaged by iconoclasts and have been repaired without any regard to the original representation".

⁷ Friedman (2012, 385-386) writes: "All the rigging lines of the mast, and the yard, and the sail are missing". For a comprehensive description of this ship, see Friedman's article.

⁸ Avi-Yonah 1954, 38: "A ship going in that direction [north] has its sail folded and is being rowed". A similar description of the sail is in Donner 1992, 37: "The left one is being rowed, with its sail folded".

⁹ Rosen 1986, 97: "The mosaicist's rendering of the furled sail as rolled and coiled around the yard is an absurdity. In sailing vessels the forces moving the boat are controlled by changing the effective area of the sail(s). In the Byzantine period this was accomplished by a system of rings and brails; the sail was furled or spread by pulling or releasing the brails. A sail wrapped around the yard could not have been thus manipulated. [...] Other methods to control the area of the sails were developed later, but the sails were never coiled around the yard".

¹⁰ Rosen 1986, 98. However, see another example of such a sail in a sixth-century church mosaic from Beit Guvrin (discussed below).

¹¹ Friedman 2012, 385.

¹² Grossmann 2011, 44: "the sailor is rowing with oars", which may explain "the unusually furled sail". She continues: "The sail, if it is a sail [...] is furled around the yard like a snake, making it technically impossible to be worked".

¹³ I thank Mat Immerzeel for bringing this to my attention. See examples in Hachlili 2009, colour plates V.8 and VII.6. See also, the eagle and serpent depicted in the Great Palace in Constantinople, a well-established seat of the Byzantine Empire (though the dating of this mosaic is under debate).

¹⁴ Meimaris/Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2005, 14.

patristic writings, as in John Chrysostom's teaching on these verses from John:

*Now if the Jews, by looking to the brazen image of a serpent, escaped death, much rather will they who believe in the Crucified, with good reason enjoy a far greater benefit. For this takes place, not through the weakness of the Crucified, or because the Jews are stronger than He, but because God loved the world, therefore is His living Temple fastened to the Cross*¹⁵.

Indeed, in Christian iconography, the image of a serpent has several meanings, including the crucified Christ. In *Understanding Early Christian Art*, Robin Jensen describes Moses's bronze serpent atop a pole as a primary symbol for the cross in early Christian art¹⁶. In this same discussion, she men-

tions another representation of the cross that is drawn from the material world – the sail of a ship. When considering this symbol, some scholars cite Justin Martyr: "The sea cannot be traversed unless the sign of victory, which is called a sail, remain fast in the ship..." (1 Apol. 55.3-8, Dial. 91.2)¹⁷. The rendering of the larger ship in the Madaba map seems to integrate these two symbols of the cross – one scriptural and one tangible – into a single image. One inscription in the Madaba map explicitly mentions Moses's brazen serpent by identifying the wilderness location where Moses is thought to have fashioned it and exercised its healing powers: "Desert where the Israelites were saved by the serpent of brass" (Ἐρημ[ος] ἐνθα[υ] τοὺς Ἰσραηλῖτας ἐ(σ)ω(σ)ιν ὁ χαλκοὺς ὄφεις; Pls 5, 6)¹⁸. This makes explicit the significance of the brazen serpent in Num. 21 for those who designed this mosaic map; furthermore, it may offer supporting evidence for their deliberate depiction of a serpent on the yard of the ship on the left and its association with Moses's serpent. Such intention may support a longstanding thesis, recently elaborated by Irfan Shahid, which reads this map as a depiction of Moses's vista from Mount Nebo. If this thesis is accurate, it would explain the depiction of this sail as the bronze serpent on the staff since its scriptural origins are associated with Moses¹⁹. The use of snakes as a Christian motif in the region near Madaba is attested by additional images of serpents, though without crosses, on some fifty Christian tombstones from Zoar (Byzantine Zoora; today Ghor es-Safi, Jordan) from 385-453 CE²⁰.

A survey of furled sails in Roman and Byzantine mosaics that predate the Madaba map confirms the distinctive design of this sail. To illustrate, a fourth-century mosaic from a villa in Piazza Armerina, Sicily portrays two ships being loaded with exotic animals, probably a shipment from North Africa to Rome. The sails of these vessels are furled beneath their yards (not around them) and secured with robands. The brails that would enable adjustment of the sails are clearly visible²¹. Similarly, in a late third-century mosaic from Althiburus, Tunisia with over twenty boats and ships, all furled sails are shown beneath their yards with robands and brails²². These two mosaics are representative examples which indicate that, with the exception of the ship in the Madaba map (and a limited number of contemporaneous examples that I will discuss in greater detail), in Roman and Byzantine mosaics,

¹⁵ *Homily 27 on the Gospel of John*. This translation follows Schaff 1983, Vol. 14, 94. On the relationship between art and text, see Maguire 1987, 1-2, who writes that "a text can explain *why* an image has a particular form; that is, there can be a cause-and-effect relationship between literature and art, so the work of art becomes in some sense an illustration of the text. But a text can also explain *what* a given image means; it can reveal the thought processes that lie behind the work of art, even if the text itself was not known either directly or indirectly to the artist. In the latter case, the art historian is not concerned with proving that a given text has influenced an image, but he or she tries to show that both text and image reflect similar modes of thought". See also his methodological discussion on *ibidem*, 3, 81-82.

¹⁶ Whereas most modern depictions of a serpent on a cross portray its ascent of the vertical pole toward the yard, in medieval art, the serpent is often placed on the horizontal pole; see, for example, the colour illustration of Moses with brass serpent in the Vatopedi Octateuch, Mount Athos, Codex 602 (an illuminated manuscript dated to ca. thirteenth century); this picture is presented in Huber 1973, 40, colour Fig. 32. Thus, a horizontally positioned snake could plausibly represent the brazen serpent.

¹⁷ Jensen 2000, 140-141. See also Daniélou 1964, 66, who writes: "In his *First Apology*, Justin gives a number of figures of the cross, among them the brazen serpent, the military standard, the plough and the ship's mast: 'One cannot sail the seas unless the trophy that is called the sail (ἱστῖον) is properly set on the ship' [...] it is the ship which is the means of salvation".

¹⁸ Avi-Yonah 1954, 43. See also Donner 1992, 43; Alliaia 1998, 45-101 (95).

¹⁹ Shahid 1998, 147-154.

²⁰ Meimaris/Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2005, 14.

²¹ Friedman 2011, 147-154.

²² See the illustration in Grossmann 2011, 26; Friedman 2011, 155.



Pl. 5. Madaba mosaic map: "The desert where the Israelites were saved by the serpent of brass" (after Piccirillo/Alliata 1998, 97)



Pl. 6. Detail of Pl. 5

furled sails appear below the yard (not coiled around it) with a system of brails²³.

This evidence, alongside Christian art and literature, further supports a symbolic interpretation of this sail's shape and position²⁴. Thus it seems improbable that the representation of this sail is accidental or erroneous; rather, it likely displays a variation on a well-established theme. Jaś Elsner emphasizes that, even though Christian art appropriated many Greco-Roman forms, it often "radically transformed what it borrowed". Elsner claims that "Christianity did not need a mimetic art", for that medium "became slowly irrelevant in a culture that perceived everything in the material world to be a symbol of something that transcended nature"²⁵. I would suggest that the sail of the left ship in the Madaba map illustrates this Christian artistic trend. Therefore, neither those who commissioned and designed this mosaic nor the worshippers

and pilgrims who viewed it would have been concerned about the unrealistic shape of its sail: for them it probably conveyed a message of salvation.

While maritime subjects are commonly portrayed in Mediterranean mosaics from this period (and earlier centuries)²⁶, scholars debate whether these images acquired additional meanings in Christian contexts²⁷. According to Jensen, nautical images in Christian artistry "made use of those popular motifs and adapted them to its own use, imbuing them with somewhat different meaning"²⁸. As suggested above, the mast, yard, and sail of one ship in the Madaba map are in the shape of a cross and a ser-

²³ For additional examples, see Grossmann 2011, 30, 33.

²⁴ As Jensen (2011, 140) writes: "the cross as a symbol of Christ's passion was recognized in all sorts of guises". She adds: "Fear of over-interpretation also has caused many scholars to be conservative about identifying various signs as 'crypto-crosses'. Textual evidence, however, tends to support the association of certain objects with the cross. A number of documents reveal that the cross as a symbol of Christ's passion was recognized in all sorts of guises. Christians found examples both in the Hebrew scriptures and in external world. For early Christian writers, at least, the cross's very ubiquity demonstrated the predestined character of Christ's sacrifice and triumph." Despite Theodosius's ban on the incorporation of the cross as a symbol on floor pavements (decreed in 427 CE), several examples of such crosses are featured in later constructions, including in Jordan. For a summary of scholarly opinions and bibliography on this subject, see Hachlili 2009, 224-226.

²⁵ Elsner 1995, 287.

²⁶ As Jensen (2000, 48) writes: "Maritime themes in general were quite popular in late antiquity, and boats with sailors or waters teeming with all kinds of sea creatures were especially chosen for mosaic pavements. Some of the imagery is purely decorative, some mythological, some of it quite realistic and detailed". See examples in Friedman 2011.

²⁷ In Christian contexts, ships are also incorporated in mosaic representations of the Jonah narrative (Hachlili 2009, 91). Hachlili also describes boats and ships within "Nilotic scenes on Byzantine mosaics pavement" (*ibidem*, 96-101, 105). She presents various scholarly views on "whether the Nilotic scenes have a specific meaning in their pagan, Jewish and Christian contexts" (*ibidem*, 106-109, 228, 286), concluding that: "It seems likely that the themes and motifs in these Nilotic mosaic pavements, which were popular and used mainly for decoration, were taken from pattern books from which the artists or the clients could choose either the full Nilotic scheme or isolated motifs without relating any symbolic meaning to them [...]" (*ibidem*, 109). However, despite focusing on many elements from the Madaba mosaic in this discussion of Nilotic motifs, she makes no mention of the ships under consideration here (*ibidem*, 103, 107).

²⁸ Jensen 2000, 48.

pent, embodying the story of Christian salvation. The vessel itself may also symbolize a Christian message: the ship is the Church, which sails a dangerous sea that represents the world. The Church alone enables humans to reach port and be saved, as explained by Hippolytus in the third century:

The sea is the world. The Church is like a ship, buffeted by the waves but not swamped, for she has with her [her] experienced pilot, Christ. Amidships she has the trophy of victory over death, for she carries Christ's cross with her [...]. For her double rudder she has the two Testaments [...]. The ladder rising upward to the sail yard is an image of the sign of Christ's passion leading the faithful to climb up onto Heaven (Hippolytus, Antichr. 59)²⁹.

Related imagery is also found in this fourth-century hymn by Ephrem:

*Skilled Sailor Who has conquered the raging sea,
Your glorious wood is a standard; it has become
the rudder of life.
Your wind of mercy blew; the ships set straight out
from the raging sea to the harbor of peace.
Blessed is he who has become a sailor for himself
[or for his soul], has preserved and brought forth
his treasure [on dry land] (Ephrem, Hymns of Vir-
ginity, 31:15)³⁰.*

The metaphor of a ship as the Church recalling Noah's ark, in which one righteous family was preserved while the remainder of humanity was being

destroyed, is already mentioned in the New Testament (1 Peter 3:20):

... who in former times did not obey, when God waited patiently in the days of Noah, during the building of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were saved through water.

Nautical iconography is commonly included in fifth- and sixth-century church floor mosaics in Jordan, Syria, Lebanon, and Israel. Scholars are often hesitant to apply Christian symbolism to these representations. Yet, in some instances, an inscription suggests such an interpretation, as in the case of a mosaic church floor at Khaldé (south of Beirut; second half of the fifth century), which also includes two ships³¹. According to Henry Maguire, "the sail of one of them was flanked by the inscription *pl[oion] ērēnes*, or 'ship of peace'". Maguire claims that: "The words suggest that the ship is to be read as a symbol of the peace to be found in the Christian church"³². The remains of the fifth-century basilica in Rayân, Syria (east of the Orontes River) provide another example. In its nave, the mosaic carpet that is closest to the apse depicts ships in two of its nine octagons. One of these vessels includes an inscription that is bifurcated by its mast: "PIAT-YKA". According to Pauline Donceel-Voûte, this term signals that this ship is for those who can save and be saved³³. She reads this as a reference to Noah's ark, symbolic of the Church and its capacity to save those who enter. If this interpretation is accurate, then this inscription and, by extension, the ship whose mast it frames, relate to Christian salvation. Although it lacks an inscription, the mosaic floor from the fifth-century basilica in Sorân, Syria also features a ship whose mast has a small cross attached to its upper portion³⁴.

While we can identify Byzantine mosaic depictions of ships that seem to be purely decorative³⁵, these examples (and those discussed below) indicate that the ships depicted in fifth- and sixth-century church mosaics often convey Christian symbolism. Likewise, the left-hand ship in the Madaba map – with its cross and serpent – appears to be more than ornamental.

THE SHIP'S IMAGE IN CONTEXT

Size as an indicator of prominence

Scholarship on the Madaba map has correlated the size of geographical sites with their significance, as

²⁹ This translation follows Daniélou 1964, 60 (see also the entire chapter 'The Ship of the Church', 58-70). See Jensen 2000, 139-140.

³⁰ This translation follows McVey 1989, 401. On nautical symbolism in Eastern Christianity, see Buck 1999, 114-117.

³¹ Donceel-Voûte 1988b, 359-371; Grossmann 2011, 19-22.

³² For references to ships as symbols of the Church in patristic writings, see Maguire 1987, 33-34.

³³ See her explanations for this reading: Donceel-Voûte 1988b, 362. She also acknowledges that this inscription may preserve the proper name of a female donor, a particular ship, or the school that produced the mosaic; yet, based on the ship's placement within the church, she favours an interpretation of this ship as a symbol of salvation. Compare, Grossmann 2011, 11-13, who translates this inscription as "the one who is able to save", which she links to "the safety of the sailors".

³⁴ Grossmann 2011, 15-18.

³⁵ See examples in Friedman 2011.

exemplified by the expansive dimensions of Jerusalem. Donner writes that: “The mosaicist wanted to depict Jerusalem much larger than any other city or village, because Jerusalem was the most important city of all and the ‘navel of the earth’”³⁶. Hagith Sivan notes that “two entities dominate the map, the Dead Sea and Jerusalem”. In her brief discussion of the Dead Sea, she comments that this body of water “emerged as an impressive topographical anchor wildly out of tune with its role in biblical history”, while disregarding the ships entirely. Jerusalem, however, receives more attention:

*[T]he Madaba map positioned Jerusalem in its centre. It was a Jerusalem that barely corresponded with a geographical reality. But its shape, an oval, was strikingly reminiscent of the rabbinic omphalos which designated the centrality of the city in the universe. Madaba’s Jerusalem loomed larger than all other localities, and with more details than those selected for any other urban centre*³⁷.

Like most scholars, Sivan primarily attends to Jerusalem while ignoring the ships above it, at the centre of the map. Their considerable size notwithstanding, scholarship has generally overlooked these ships and their symbolic value³⁸. In fact, the ship that we have been examining is slightly larger than Jerusalem – approx. 88 cm × 65 cm (width by height), as compared with 88 cm × 50 cm³⁹ – though its significance has hardly been noted.

Placement within the map and the church

Despite partial preservation of the Madaba map and our limited knowledge of its placement in the sixth-century church, scholars have attempted to understand its original position and liturgical effect. There is a consensus that the congregation could view the mosaic during worship, yet the degree of access remains open for debate⁴⁰. Scholars also concur that the mosaic had a focal position within the church. Though its representation of the City of Madaba no longer exists, Donceel-Voûte posits that Jerusalem and Madaba would have been situated “on the central axis of the church”⁴¹. If so, the left ship would have been on that axis, beneath Madaba and directly above Jerusalem where, according to Eugenio Alliata: “the mosaicist would place what was most important to him”⁴². Thus, the centrality of this ship in the map and design of

this church further affirms its role in communicating Christian salvation. This communication may not have only been visual for, as Donner offers, “members of the congregation could come into direct contact with the holy and promised land: they could tread upon it, of course not with shoes but barefoot”⁴³. Rina Talgam also argues that the placement of this mosaic within the church layout “made it possible for one to make a virtual, or spiritual, pilgrimage within the walls of the church and via its liturgy”⁴⁴. The left ship could have played a role in such a pilgrimage; especially due to its position between Madaba (as conjectured) and Jerusalem, in front of the sanctuary, in the eastern portion of the church.

Up to this point our analysis has focused on the left ship, discussing its key role within the Madaba church mosaic, specifically as a symbol of Christian salvation; now let us consider the smaller ship to its right (see Pls 1-2, 4). Unfortunately even fewer of its details remain since one sailor has been disfigured by iconoclasts and its mast, most of its sail, yard and rigging and the other sailor have been

³⁶ Donner 1992, 19.

³⁷ Sivan 2008, 256-257.

³⁸ Based on my review of the literature, Estée Dvorjetski (1996, 82-88) appears to be the sole scholar to attribute symbolic meaning to the Dead Sea and the ships in the Madaba map. However, she does not present possible interpretations.

³⁹ The right ship is smaller: approx. 70 cm × 50 cm (width by height).

⁴⁰ Avi-Yonah (1954, 34) claims that the mosaic “was meant to be seen by and explained to the faithful peering at it from behind a chancel-screen”. Donner (1992, 29) argues that “The mosaic map lay like a transept in front of the *schola cantorum* and the altar, visible from all sides”. Talgam (2014, 242-243) insists that the mosaic was placed in the nave rather than behind a chancel-screen and thus accessible to all. See also Shahid 1998, 152, who also writes: “The map lay between the priest at the altar or in the chancel and the congregation stood – as was normal in those days – at the other end of the church”.

⁴¹ Donceel-Voûte 1988a, 519-542 (520-521).

⁴² Alliata (1998, 121) notes the central placement of the Dead Sea without mentioning the ships: “The central portion of the map stood in front of the chancel of the sanctuary, where the mosaicist would place what was most important to him. The central part of the map is marked horizontally by the wavy course of the Jordan River and by the Dead Sea”.

⁴³ Donner 1992, 30-31.

⁴⁴ Talgam 2014, 243. Neither Donner nor Talgam discuss a possible role for these ships in the liturgy.

covered with cement. Despite this damage, some information can be surmised. This ship is smaller: approx. 70 cm × 50 cm, as compared with the approx. 88 cm × 65 cm vessel. In this ship, the two sailors are standing, with one seeming to hold a pair of oars. The sail is open and we can see small portions of the yard and rigging. A yellowish-brown pile of mound in the middle of deck, between the two sailors, appears to be grain⁴⁵. Given that it is difficult to ascribe symbolic value to one ship and a decorative role to the other, several questions arise: Why are the sailors in one ship standing while those in the other are seated? What do their respective cargos denote and do they have symbolic meaning⁴⁶? How might we understand the positions of these two ships relative to holy cities, with the larger ship located above Jerusalem and the smaller one (in the southern Dead Sea) above Hebron? And what might their placement directly beneath rivers – with the smaller ship below the Zared and the larger beneath the Arnon – communicate? Given their many parallel features, why do these vessels differ in size? Do these elements all carry symbolic significance or might some be attributed to strictly ornamental considerations?

The damage to the sailors in both ships and the missing sections of the smaller vessel interfere with our ability to answer these questions with confidence. Nonetheless, we do have sufficient data for educated hypotheses. I propose that the larger ship – situated on the central axis that could plausibly have joined Jerusalem and Madaba, characterized

by a symbol of Christ (comprised of the sail and mast, as discussed above) and occupied by two seated sailors with a load of salt – represents the New Testament or the Church⁴⁷. The smaller one, with the “brownish-yellowish”⁴⁸ cargo and two standing sailors, symbolizes the Old Testament or members of the prior covenant. Though we cannot be certain, some of their dissimilarities may support this understanding by signalling a hierarchy between the two vessels: their differing sizes; the position of the larger ship above Jerusalem and the smaller one above Hebron; their respective cargos of salt (Matthew 5:13: “You are the salt of the earth”) and grain; and, seated sailors in the larger ship and upright figures in the smaller – in the Roman world a seated position reflected honour and prestige whereas standing was a posture of service⁴⁹. Based on these features, these vessels occupy decidedly unequal stations.

In order to test these claims, it is imperative to examine the symbolism of paired boats or ships in the New Testament and, especially, in patristic literature. A logical starting point is Luke 5:1-11, which features two boats of fishermen⁵⁰, four of whom abandon their trade to follow Christ and serve as apostles (variations of this narrative appear in Mark 1:16-20 and Matthew 4:18-22). Augustine states that these four evangelists were called to follow Christ in pairs:

*He called the disciples two by two, and Himself gave them the command to follow Him, at first addressing Peter and Andrew, and then the others, namely, the two sons of Zebedee*⁵¹.

The two pairs of sailors in the Madaba map could be seen as references to this event. Naturally, the three Synoptic versions of this scene take place on the Sea of Galilee, known for its abundant marine life – not the Dead Sea, famed for the opposite – yet, if we forgive that incongruous feature, this interpretation is quite feasible.

Patristic teachings also regard paired boats allegorically, signifying gentiles and Jews who joined the Church. According to Ephrem, they refer to the circumcised and uncircumcised individuals who became members of the Church, that is to say Jews and gentiles, respectively⁵². Similarly, Augustine views these boats as representations of Jews and gentiles within the Church: “The two ships figured the One Church, but made out of two peoples,

⁴⁵ For a comprehensive description of this vessel, see Friedman 2012, 386.

⁴⁶ Avi-Yonah tentatively proposes that the larger ship carries salt and the smaller one grain. Donner (1992, 17) identifies the cargo as “heaps of salt or barley”. Friedman (2012, 386) posits that the larger ship is transporting salt: “A white mound is placed on mid-deck, between the figures. It represents the cargo of bulk salt”. She suggests that the smaller vessel is hauling bitumen or grain: “An ochre mound is placed on the mid-deck. It represents the bulk cargo of bitumen (*hemar*, in Hebrew) or grain”. See also Rosenson 1986, 16-20.

⁴⁷ In this context, Moses’s brass serpent may reflect an additional meaning, as in John 3:14-15.

⁴⁸ Avi-Yonah 1954, 40.

⁴⁹ See Roller 2006.

⁵⁰ For examples of fishing activity depicted in mosaics, see Hachlili 2009, 175.

⁵¹ *The Harmony of the Gospels*, II, 40: Schaff 1983, Vol. 6, 123 (S.D.F. Salmond).

⁵² See Murray 1975, 176.

joined together in Christ, though coming from different parts”⁵³. Elsewhere Augustine refers to this fishing scene by the evangelists: “It was done by two vessels, with reference to the circumcision and the uncircumcision”⁵⁴. According to these commentaries, this pair of boats or ships stands for the two groups that formed the united Church: Jews and gentiles. These patristic explanations are compatible with Shahid’s interpretation of the Madaba map even though his analysis makes no mention of the ships: “The map represents the history of Christian salvation in its entirety encompassing both the old and the new chosen people”⁵⁵.

The question of hierarchy has not yet been addressed, however. When two ships are present in church mosaics from this era, are they typically equal or does one usually hold superior rank? Though no pictorial disparities hint at a difference in status between either pair of ships in the mosaics from Khaldé and Rayân (mentioned above), only one vessel in each is accompanied by an inscription: “ship of peace” in Khaldé and “of those who can save and be saved” (as noted earlier), which may also be translated as “the savior”, in Rayân. Despite the absence of an inscription over either ship in the Madaba map, their visual disparities may evoke such a hierarchy.

It therefore seems plausible that the two ships in the Madaba map have Christian symbolic value. This assessment is further supported by evidence from the mosaic church floors from this region which are dated from the fifth-sixth centuries and feature ships and fishing themes. One example is from Horbat Beit Loya (Pls 7-8). Located south-east of Meresha, Israel and dated to 500 CE, this church has 2.5-meter wide aisles that are situated along the two sides of the nave⁵⁶. Each aisle is paved with geometrically designed mosaics that include rows of circles and squares. At the mid-point of each mosaic is a large medallion whose diameter is almost as wide as the aisle. Each medallion bears images of two fishermen that – as at Madaba – were damaged by iconoclasts who replaced their stones at random. In the northern aisle, the central medallion presents a fishing ship with two open sails and two fishermen, with one apparently holding a fishing rod with a fish caught at the end of its line and the other controlling the oars. The pair of fishermen in the parallel medallion in the southern aisle are standing ashore, with one bearing a basket of fish and the other a net. In

her assessment of these depictions, Talgam states that since “this area is far from water or a river, it cannot be said that they reflect the occupation of the local inhabitants”; therefore, she reasons, these images may evoke the apostles⁵⁷. With regard to their size, like the ships at Madaba, these vessels and fishermen form the centrepieces of these aisle mosaics; here, however, the images are symmetrically bound within the medallions.

A second example is from the mid-sixth century church of Mahatt-el-Urdi in Beit Guvrin, Israel, a church complex that includes a basilica with nave, apse, and two side aisles. The southern aisle mosaic presents four central medallions (three have been preserved to some extent): one partially intact medallion portrays a ship with two sailors. According to Ruth and Asher Ovadia, this image reflects Jonah being cast from the ship⁵⁸. The northern aisle had four central octagons (three remain) with major images; the octagons are separated by a cross comprised of five squares. The second octagon shows a ship with two men: one is fishing while the other is handling oars. At the centre of this vessel is a mast with a sail furled around its yard, an image that resembles the large ship in the Madaba map⁵⁹. This scene too may refer to a pair of apostles. As in Horbat Beit Loya, these nautical and fishing images are not reflected in the design of the larger mosaic

⁵³ *Sermon 87 on the New Testament*: Schaff 1983, Vol. 6, 519 (R.G. MacMullen).

⁵⁴ *On the Gospel of St. John*, CXXII, 7: Schaff 1983, Vol. 7, 442 (J. Gibb and J. Innes).

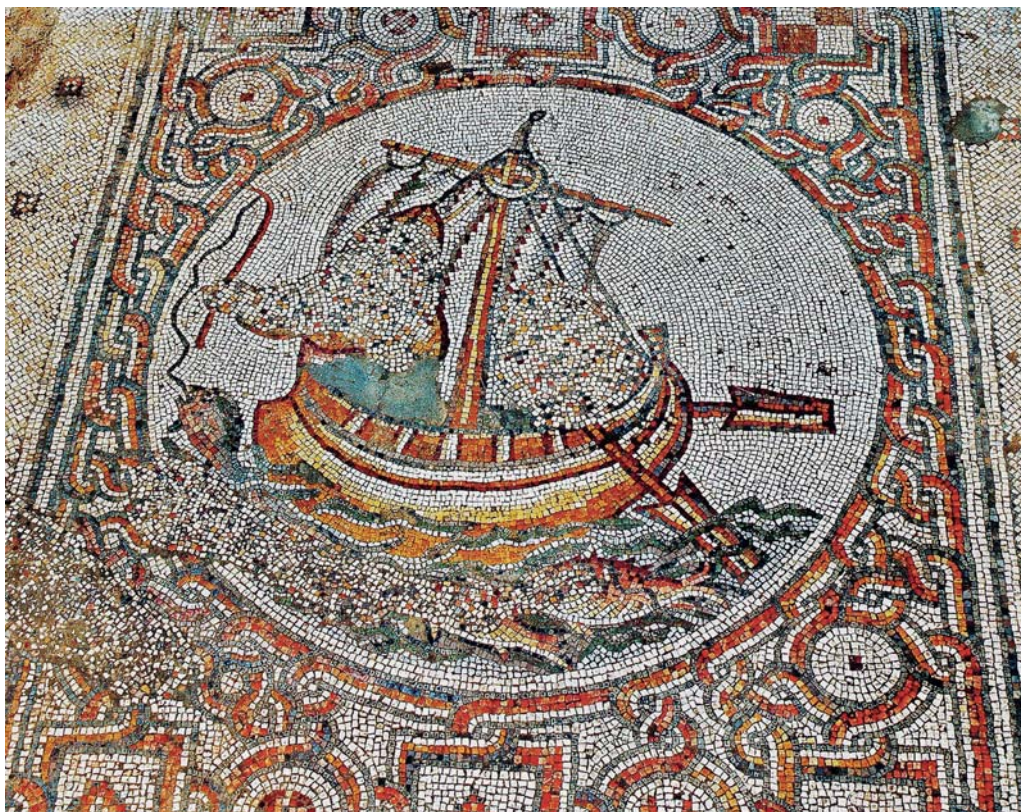
⁵⁵ Shahid 1998, 151-152.

⁵⁶ Patrich/Tsafrir 1993, 263-272 (266).

⁵⁷ Talgam 2014, 195-196. Patrich/Tsafrir 1993, 269, also raise this possibility but with greater caution: “One may be tempted to view these fishermen as the Disciples converting people to Christianity [...] but such an interpretation is hypothetical”.

⁵⁸ Ovadia/Ovadia 1987, 19. On representations of Jonah in this mosaic and others, see Talgam 2014, 244-246.

⁵⁹ Grossmann 2011, 37-38. In her discussion of this similarity, Grossman offers that the mosaicist of Beit Guvrin “may have derived its pattern from the same source as the Madaba artist, considering that the two mosaics are more or less contemporary”. She also asks if it could “simply be the case that the Madaba Map was known to the mosaicist in Palestine and he found it desirable to copy?”. For another possible example, see the mosaic from a Byzantine church in Umm al-Manabi’, Jordan (Piccirillo 1993, 341). This mosaic was destroyed and only a rough sketch remains.



Pl. 7. Church, Horbat Beit Loya, northern aisle; a fishing ship (Courtesy of Joseph Patrich and Yoram Tsafrir; photograph: G. Laron)



Pl. 8. Church, Horbat Beit Loya, southern aisle; two fishermen (Courtesy of Joseph Patrich and Yoram Tsafrir; photograph: G. Laron)

but are confined within the frames of these geometrical shapes. However, their size and centrality relative to the other elements in the mosaic and its overall composition communicate their significance.

Another commonality shared by the mosaic church floors of Horbat Beit Loya, Mahatt-el-Urdi and Madaba is their depiction of sailors or fishermen in pairs. Other church mosaics from Jordan and Israel during this period also present pairs of sailors: a sixth-century mosaic floor from a church in Hadita (near Lod, Israel) includes two naked sailors aboard a ship loaded with nine *amphorae*⁶⁰; two sailors also appear in the fifth-sixth century church in Zay Al-Gharby, Jordan, though the upper portions of their bodies have been damaged by iconoclasts⁶¹.

This pattern should not be taken as the standard, for the number of sailors or fishermen featured in Roman and Byzantine mosaics vary⁶²: some vessels are depicted without anyone on board, as in Khaldé and Rayân (discussed above); while others, usually rowboats (without sails), are depicted with one sailor, as in the sixth-century Church of the Holy Martyrs Lot and Procopius (located on the slope of Mount Nebo, not far from Madaba)⁶³. Although Roman mosaics can depict as many as five sailors in a vessel and even more in warships⁶⁴, the mosaic images in Byzantine churches often present sailing vessels without a crew or with two sailors. In fifth- and sixth-century church mosaics from Jordan and Israel, sailing ships with two seamen are the norm. The pairs of sailors in the ships from Madaba therefore fit the regional pattern found in contemporaneous churches from Jordan and Israel (especially from the Shephelah) where each sailing vessel is occupied by a pair of fishermen or sailors.

This assessment of nautical iconography in fifth- and sixth-century Byzantine churches indicates that these images are not ornamental but rather are laden with Christian meaning, thus supporting the claim presented here, that the ships in the Madaba map also bear such significance.

CONCLUSION

This paper aims to demonstrate that the ships in the Madaba map are far too prominent, in terms of their design, size, and placement, to be considered merely ornamental. The better-preserved larger

ship (on the left) is significant for two reasons: its yard is rare among representations of Roman and Byzantine ships, at least before the sixth century, and its sail resembles a snake twisting around that yard. This latter image combines two symbols of Christ and the cross – Moses's brazen serpent from Scripture and the sail from the material world – forming a compound image that communicates the triumph of Christian salvation. This reference to the brazen serpent in Num. 21 also strengthens the assertion that this map represents a Christian version of Moses's view from Mount Nebo⁶⁵.

Although ships often served as stock elements in Roman and Byzantine art, the vessels at the centre of this mosaic floor appear to have symbolic meaning. The one on the left, which bears the cross with a serpent twisted around its horizontal plank, is located above Jerusalem and approximates the size of this holy city. I consider these qualities too compelling to be purely decorative; nevertheless, the contemporary scholars who have analysed this map rarely mention these ships or their symbolism⁶⁶.

Even the historians who have assessed these ships as evidence of Byzantine commerce and shipping on the Dead Sea are silent with respect to their deeper meaning. While I concur that these ships contribute to our knowledge of the history of maritime trade, I contend that these images should also be valued as Christian icons. That perspective alone can explain the alleged 'error' in the artistic depiction of the serpentine sail. Furthermore, this symbolic approach is crucial for the interpretation of this mosaic as an exceptional work of Christian art that illustrates the victory of Christian salvation within a map of the Holy Land.

⁶⁰ Grossmann 2011, 40-41.

⁶¹ Grossmann 2011, 51-53; Piccirillo 1993, 318, 325-324.

⁶² See example in Grossmann 2011.

⁶³ Grossmann 2011, 51-53; Piccirillo 1993, 165-164.

⁶⁴ See Friedman 2011, 67, 72-73, 76-77, 87-88, 140-158. See also the four sailors (possibly more) in the partially preserved ship depicted in a wall mural from the Baptistry in the Christian building of Dura-Europos (destroyed in 256 CE).

⁶⁵ Shahid 1998. See also Talgam 2014, 241.

⁶⁶ As in the case of Donner 1992, 30-31, who views this mosaic as a visual summary of Christian salvation, which fulfils important educational and liturgical purposes, but without ascribing any role or related interpretation to these ships.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Alliata, E. 1998, 'The Legends of the Madaba Map', in: Piccirillo/Alliata 1998, 45-101.
- Avi-Yonah, M. 1954, *The Madaba Map with Introduction and Commentary*, Jerusalem.
- Buck, Chr. 1999, *Paradise and Paradigm: Key Symbols in Persian Christianity and the Baba'i Faith*, New York.
- Daniélou, J. 1964, *Primitive Christian Symbols*, London.
- Donceel-Voûte, P. 1988a, 'La carte de Madaba: cosmographie, anachronisme et propagande', *Revue Biblique* 95, 519-542.
- Donceel-Voûte, P. 1988b, *Les pavements des églises byzantines de Syrie et du Liban: Décor, archéologie et liturgie*, Louvain.
- Donner, H. 1992, *The Mosaic Map of Madaba: An Introductory Guide*, Kampen.
- Dvorjetski, E. 1996, 'Hot Springs and the Cargo of the Ships in the Dead Sea in the Light of the Madaba Map', *Ariel* 116, 82-88 [in Hebrew].
- Elsner, J. 1995, *Art and the Roman Viewer: The Transformation of Art from the Pagan World to Christianity*, Cambridge.
- Friedman, Z. 2011, *Ship Iconography in Mosaics: An Aid to Understanding Ancient Ships and their Construction*, Oxford (BAR International Series 2202).
- Friedman, Z. 2012, 'Sailing in the Dead Sea: Madaba Map Mosaic', in: L. Daniel Chrupcala (ed.), *Christ is here!: Studies in Biblical and Christian Archaeology in Memory of Michele Piccirillo*, Milan, 381-394.
- Grossmann, E. 2011, *Marine Craft in Ancient Mosaics of the Levant*, Oxford (BAR International Series 2249).
- Hachlili, R. 2009, *Ancient Mosaic Pavements: Themes, Issues, and Trends: Selected Studies*, Leiden.
- Huber, P. 1973, *Bild und Botschaft: Byzantinische Miniaturen zum Alten und Neuen Testament*, Zürich.
- Jensen, R. 2000, *Understanding Early Christian Art*, London.
- Maguire, H. 1987, *Earth and Ocean: The Terrestrial World in Early Byzantine Art*, University Park, PA.
- McVey, K.E. 1989, *Ephrem the Syrian: Hymns*, New York.
- Meimaris, Y.E., K.I. Kritikakou-Nikolaropoulou 2005, *Inscriptions from Palaestina Tertia*, Vol. Ia: *The Greek Inscriptions from Ghor es-Safi (Byzantine Zoora)*, Athens.
- Murray, R. 1975, *Symbols of Church and Kingdom: A Study in Early Syriac Tradition*, Cambridge.
- Ovadia, R., A. Ovadia 1987, *Hellenistic, Roman and Early Byzantine Mosaics Pavements in Israel*, Rome.
- Patrich, J., Y. Tsafirir 1993, 'A Byzantine Church Complex at Beit Loya', in: Y. Tsafirir (ed.), *Ancient Churches Revealed*, Jerusalem, 263-272.
- Piccirillo, M. 1993, *The Mosaics of Jordan*, Amman.
- Piccirillo, M., E. Alliata (eds) 1998, *The Madaba Map Centenary 1897-1997: Travelling Through the Byzantine Umayyad Period: Proceedings of the International Conference Held in Amman, 7-9 April 1997*, Jerusalem.
- Roller, M.B. 2006, *Dining Posture in Ancient Rome: Bodies, Values, and Status*, Princeton/Oxford.
- Rosen, B. 1986, 'An Incorrect Representation of a Sailing Boat in the Madaba Mosaic', *Israel Exploration Journal* 36, 97-98.
- Rosenson, I. 1986, 'What Were the Ships Sailing on the Dead Sea in the Map of Madaba Carrying?', *Halamish* 3, 16-20.
- Schaff, Ph. (trans. and ed.) 1983, *A Select Library of the Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers of the Christian Church* (First Series; Grand Rapids, MI; reprint of the 1886-1890 edition).
- Shahid, I. 1998, 'The Madaba Mosaic Map Revisited', in: Piccirillo/Alliata 1998, 147-154.
- Sivan, H. 2008, *Palestine in Late Antiquity*, Oxford.
- Talgam, R. 2014, *Mosaics of Faith: Floors of Pagans, Jews, Samaritans, and Muslims in the Holy Land*, Jerusalem/Pennsylvania.

Book Reviews

Li Tang & Dietmar W. Winkler (eds), *From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores. Studies on East Syriac Christianity in China and Central Asia*. Wien & Berlin: LIT Verlag, 2013. (Orientalia – patristica – oecomenica 5). 472 pp. ISBN 978-3-643-90329-7.

Western European interest in the presence of Christianity in China and Central Asia has a long history. During the middle ages stories about Christian kings in distant places triggered the imagination and the pope and European kings made efforts to contact these Christians, both in the hope to bring them in line with, and thus under the influence of Rome, and to form an alliance with the Mongols against the Turks. Later it were the first Jesuit missionaries who tried to find remnants of indigenous Christianity to which they could connect their missionary activity. Both efforts were successful, but to such a limited extent that up till the present day it remains possible to hear serious historians argue that all these tales about Christians in the Far East are fanciful myths.

In reality they are not. The exchange of goods and ideas along the 'Silk Road' has been an ongoing process since the earliest times and Jews, Christians and Manichaeans have reached China just as Zoroastrians and Buddhists did. The problem is that sources for this exchange are relatively rare, often fragmentary and coming in a wide array of very different languages (and scripts). Another handicap is that the study is still not completely free of missionary zeal, for instance when the question is asked how knowledge of Christianity during the Tang and Yuan (Mongol) dynasties in China can help to give Christianity in the Peoples Republic a proper Chinese identity.

From the Oxus River to the Chinese Shores contains papers from the Salzburg International Conference on the Church in the East in China and Central Asia held in 2009. This was the third of these four-yearly conferences and the book is the second volume published in this format¹. The volume contains an introduction followed by twenty-nine articles grouped under four headings: 'Manuscripts & inscriptions', 'History & archaeological excavations' (subdivided for the Tang period and the Mongol-Yuan period), 'Syriac Christianity along the Silk Routes' and 'Liturgical traditions & theological reflections'.

A recurring problem already noticed in the review of the earlier volume is that several of the contributors are not native speakers of English. In some instances their (written) English

is so poor that this makes it hard to understand their papers precisely. This is the more pitiful where they are specialists in their own field presenting new material or new insights. More inconvenient is it when authors refer to Turkish translations of primary and secondary sources without giving the original titles and other bibliographic details as well. And a problem of the wide ranging scope of the subject itself is that no-one can be a specialist in everything involved. Thus Chinese authors may appear not to understand Western-European (medieval) Christianity well and Western authors may find themselves lost in Chinese history. This of course proving that a lot of dialogue is still needed.

An important article in this respect is the one by Max Deeg who argues strongly for a fresh approach of the Chinese sources. These should primarily be studied and understood as Chinese documents within their cultural and historical context. Deeg is professor of Buddhist Studies at Cardiff University and works on a translation and commentary (in German) of the Chinese Christian documents from the Tang period. His article in *From the Oxus River* clearly springs from this project and makes clear how much meticulous philological work is still needed. Another fundamental article is the very first one in the volume. Here Hidemi Takahashi argues that the identification of Syriac names in Chinese sources should be founded on linguistic reconstructions of earlier stages of the Chinese language, rather than guessing by sound-analogy from transcriptions into present-day *pinyin* or in the earlier Wade-Giles system. This approach leads to new identifications and his many examples presented under the modest title 'On some transcriptions...' give a strong urge to a systematic approach. It would of course be a good idea to do such research in combination with Deeg's project. The basic work of reference should preferably be Axel Schuessler's *ABC Etymological Dictionary of Old Chinese* (Honolulu 2007) which is not mentioned by Takahashi.

Interesting, but in places hard to follow, are two articles dealing with aspects of the so-called Luoyang Nestorian Pillar, an inscribed monument discovered only in 2006. One of the

¹ For a review of the other volume, *Hidden Treasures and Intercultural Encounters*, see ECA 9, 129-130. The papers of the first conference were published by Roman Malek & Peter Hofrichter (eds), *Jingjiao. The Church of the East in China and Central Asia* (Sankt Augustin: Institut Monumenta Serica, 2006).

authors, Ge Chengyong is at present the authority on this important stone pillar and the text inscribed on it. He is also the editor of the first monograph presenting this discovery, which appeared in Chinese with English summaries.² The pictures – all the pictures – in *From the Oxus River* are too small and too gray to make out any of the illustrated inscriptions and as far as I could establish the Chinese monograph by Ge Chengyong is the only place where legible photographs of this inscription can be found. It is to be hoped that a more approachable edition and translation are part of the project at hand by Max Deeg.

Several contributions deal with the Syriac texts (manuscripts and inscriptions) and translations from Syriac into Central Asian languages. Certainly of relevance to a wider public of Syriac scholars will be the paper on ‘The importance of the Psalter at Turfan’ by Mark Dickens with not only detailed descriptions of the surviving fragments but also interesting considerations about the role of the Psalter in the Central Asian Christian communities. Again, the photographs reproduced with this paper are illegible and thus not very useful. Of

similar interest is Shinichi Muto, ‘The Triune God in the Tripartite world in a Syriac manuscript found at Khara-Khoto’ with a translation (but no transcription or edition) of a short Syriac text and a discussion of its content. The two papers under the heading ‘Syriac Christianity along the Silk Routes’ deal with ‘East Syriac missions to the Malabar Coast in the sixteenth century’ and with ‘Assyrians in Armenia. An interdisciplinary survey’. Both seem a little out of place in this volume, but are interesting in themselves.

On the whole, like its preceding volume, this is an interesting book with the advantage that its price is extremely friendly in a field where books tend to be extremely expensive. Of course this should not be the main reason to read any book, but the papers gathered in this volume are more ‘first hand’ than most of the popular works which have recently appeared about the Church in the East and thus of more relevance to the academically interested reader.

Lauran Toorians

² Ge Chengyong, 景教遗珍: 洛阳新出唐代景教经幢研究 (Jingjiao yizhen : Luoyang xinchu Tang dai Jingjiao jingdong yanjiu) *Studies on the Nestorian stone pillar of the Tang dynasty recently recovered in Luoyang* Beijing: Wenwu 2009. Only after finishing this review I managed to get a hold of a copy of this book by Ge. It contains a transcription of the text on the pillar but no English translation. The various chapters in the book have abstracts in a rather poor English.